HS teams gather for 7-on-7 scrimmages
Page B1

Stay Safe

Be mindful of your surroundings, especially in unfamiliar or dimly lit areas. Trust your instincts - if something feels off, move to a safer location if possible. Encourage neighbors to establish a neighborhood watch program to keep our communities safe.

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Sheriff, Chuck Heit

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Today's The Herald-Palladium included inside

Niles Star

Established 1886 • Serving Niles, Buchanan and Edwardsburg **JULY 18, 2026** leaderpub.com • A publication of The Herald-Palladium **$4**

'An amazing opportunity'

Firehouse Subs donates $32K to Niles Fire Department

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader correspondent

NILES — Niles firefighters are getting more than $32,000 worth of updated river rescue equipment and gear thanks to the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation.

The owners of two Michiana Firehouse Subs restaurants were on hand Wednesday afternoon to present a check to the Niles Fire Department. The check presentation took place at Losensky Park on the Dowagiac River where firefighters were

See **FIREHOUSE**, page A6

Debra Haight / For Leader Publications

From left: firefighters Tyler Burks and Zach Hoetger, Fire Chief Jeremy Connell, and Jeff and Tammie Williams of Firehouse Subs.

SPOTLIGHT 2026

Don Campbell / HP staff

Berrien County Sheriff Chuck Heit was elected sheriff in 2024 after serving as interim sheriff and undersheriff for two decades. He graduated from New Buffalo High School in 1987, then went to Central Michigan University where he majored in sociology, with a concentration in criminal justice.

A lawful calling

Heit finds a focus in community as the Berrien County sheriff

By JULIE SWIDWA
HP Correspondent

ST. JOSEPH — When Chuck Heit was 5 years old, he told his parents he wanted to be a Michigan State Police trooper.

"That was when there was a state police post in New Buffalo," Heit recalled. "My parents were supportive, although I didn't end up at the state police."

However, now as the Berrien County sheriff, Heit says he wouldn't change a thing.

"I always wanted to go into law enforcement. I wanted to help people," Heit said. "It's been a very good career. I've worked with a lot of good people."

Highlights

Name: Chuck Heit

Title: Berrien County sheriff

Hometown: New Buffalo

Fun fact: He ran a Chicago Marathon in 2012.

Heit, 56, was born in Adrian, Mich., but his family moved to New Buffalo when he was 3 years old – a move that coincided with his father accepting a job as an elementary school principal there.

He graduated from New Buffalo High School in 1987, then went to Central Michigan University where he majored in sociology,

See **HEIT**, page A5

BUCHANAN

Commissioners talk new sidewalk repair program

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader correspondent

BUCHANAN — A new sidewalk repair program is underway in the City of Buchanan. City Manager Tony McGhee reported at Monday's Buchanan City Commission meeting that the city is splitting sidewalk repair costs with homeowners.

McGhee reported that the first round of properties needing sidewalk repairs has been identified with the list sent to the contractor. He said he expects work to begin in a few weeks. Sidewalk repair costs will be split 50-50 with property owners and the city has set aside $35,000 for the first phase of the work, he said.

He noted that while the responsibility for maintaining sidewalks rests with the property owner, the city is taking the approach of encouraging participation rather than immediately requiring it. As a matter of policy, he said the city believes it is important to give people the opportunity to opt in before making repairs mandatory.

"To help make repairs more affordable, we have created a 50/50 cost share program so property owners are only responsible for half of the cost instead of the full amount," he said. "For those who prefer not to pay their share upfront, the City will finance that portion and spread the repayment over three years through their property taxes."

"Once we complete the list of property owners who voluntarily participate, we will begin working through the properties that chose not to participate during this initial phase," he said. "Those property owners will still be eligible for the same 50/50 cost share program under the same terms, but we want to first focus our efforts on those who are ready to move forward.

In the initial phase, he said the city has prioritized sidewalks along higher pedestrian traffic corridors and routes commonly used by children walking to and from school. "Our goal is to improve safety while making the program as fair and financially manageable as possible for our residents," he said.

Monday's meeting also featured three public hearings. Two of the public hearings-the ones about signs and brush pickup-were the second public hearings on those topics and were enacted into law by the City Commission later in the meeting.

The first new ordinance repeals the city's old sign ordinance, while the second one codifies the city's brush pickup policy as to what will and will not be picked up into an ordinance. McGhee said earlier that sign regulations are handled in the new unified development code zoning ordinance approved last fall.

The third public hearing was on an update to the city's bicycle ordinance. The second public hearing and possible adoption is scheduled for the commission's Aug. 10 meeting.

McGhee and commissioners noted that the current ordinance dates back to the 1950s or earlier and requires the police department to inspect bicycles and issue license plates for them. The new ordinance will modernize the rules and regulations regarding bicycles and also address e-bikes and electric scooters.

McGhee said earlier that the current ordinance does not allow people to ride bicycles on sidewalks and the new one won't either-but will include e-bikes in that prohibition. People can learn more about the proposed updated bicycle ordinance on Police Chief Harvey Burnett's "Chief's Corner" report on the city website.

Burnett made two presentations at Monday's meeting, the first to commend police officers and employees and the second to announce the annual National Night Out event scheduled for Aug. 4 at McCoy's Creek Park south of Buchanan High School.

Burnett presented letters of commendations to Sgt. Michael Horton for his faithful leadership of the Buchanan Police Department Reserve Program and Officer Philip Huang for his faithful work as the School Resource Officer with Buchanan Community Schools.

Professional Admin/Records Clerk Diana Selir was honored for her dedication to providing professional and courteous administrative support and service to Department personnel and the public and Code Enforcement Officer Jason

See **SIDEWALK**, page A6

Niles council approves annual Apple Festival

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — The Apple Festival Committee's request to conduct the 54th annual Four Flags Area Apple Festival from Thursday, Oct.1 through Sunday, Oct. 4 was approved 6-1 during Monday's Niles City Council meeting.

The four-day event will ring in the fall season with all kinds of entertainment, activities and treats. The city will contribute $7,762 in-kind donations to support the festival, which will cover the cost of barricade setup and removal, policing and utility and street costs. The list of requests also included permission to conduct the annual Apple Festival Grande Parade scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 3 as well as the Youth Day Parade set for Saturday, Sept. 26.

Fourth ward councilmember Michael Thompson cast the lone dissenting vote because he does not believe the city should contribute funds toward events. The council also approved the Apple Festival's annual fireworks display set for Friday, Oct. 2.

In other business, the council approved the Limited Option in support of ARK Capital LLC's development of the properties at S. 3rd and Broadway Streets. ARK Capital aims to redevelop city-owned properties located at 16 S. 3rd St., 20 S. 3rd Street and two parcels on Broadway Street and sought a commitment from the city that the properties will be available as they work through their planning efforts. Council documents state that the properties in question were heavily promoted on various levels with minimal viable interest.

See **APPLE**, page A6

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

The 54th annual Four Flags Area Apple Festival will take place from Thursday, Oct.1 through Sunday, Oct. 4.

Today's obituaries • Pages A3 and A4

Billie Bailey
Linda Timm
Pamela J. Miller
Jess Tietsort
Andrea Lyn Bergenham
Bill Evans
Gaye Joanis
Ruby Lee Wolverton
Daniel Thomas
Arden Withers

Inside today's Herald-Palladium

Automotive	C6	Focus	B1	Opinion	B6
Business	C4	Food	B7	Puzzles	B4
Comics	B5	Home & Garden	C7	Television	D3

6 54708 09550 1

Keeping history alive

Vandalia hosts annual Underground Railroad Days

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

VANDALIA — The Underground Railroad Society of Cass County MI and the Village of Vandalia partnered for the annual Underground Railroad Days Saturday and Sunday.

Underground Railroad Days celebrates the legacy of the Underground Railroad in Cass County, particularly the area around Vandalia – Calvin, Porter and Penn Townships – known as "Young's Prairie" at the time. The UGRR existed in this area from 1830 to 1860 and it is estimated about 1,500 fugitive slaves passed through this area on their way to Canada. Many stayed for a time and worked on Quaker farms. They were targets of the infamous 1847 Kentucky Slave Raid.

The two-day event will feature guided tours of Kentucky Raid sites, a living history encampment of the Civil War 102nd U.S. Colored Troops, and all day entertainment at the Ramptown Cabin in Milo Barnes Park.

Festivities centered in the Village of Vandalia, as well as four nearby Underground Railroad stations: The Victorian James E. Bonine House, 18970 M-60, home of Quaker abolitionists James E. and Sarah Bogue Bonine, and the Bonine Carriage House across the street where fugitive slaves were sheltered; the Stephen and Hannah Bogue House, 20283 M-60 and Brownsville School No. 1, 20559 Osborn St.

Historic music was played at the Bonine House to immerse guests into the time period. In addition to the tours and historic sites, vendors, food trucks and family activities were located on the village grounds.

Volunteering at the Bonine Carriage House was Paul Lawson, whose family descended from freed slaves. He traced his mother's side of the family back to the 1850s.

"There was a slave owner in Virginia who had 51 slaves," he said. "Most people had six or seven and he had 51 slaves, but he grew up with them. They all got along and when he died, he emancipated them. He said they were all free, but they couldn't stay in Virginia. They had to leave, so they headed this way. They went on the Ohio River, took a barge and floated into Cincinnati. They took a train from there to Elkhart. Some of the churches around here picked them up, brought them up here and some settled here while some kept going on. That's where I finally come from."

Volunteering with the URSCC has become a family affair for Lawson, whose son also volunteered during the event. For Lawson, keeping the Underground Railroad's history in Cass County alive for future generations is important.

"To me, when this history dies, it's gone for good. It's like people die twice," Lawson said. "They die the first time and then again when nobody knows that they even existed. But when you're young, you don't think about it. When you get older, you realize that you're standing on the shoulders of the people before you. They worked hard to get to this space. Nowadays, it seems like we're going backwards. I just try to keep it going myself."

Additional information on the URSCC's work, as well as information on donating to their efforts, can be found at urscc.org and friendsofbrownsvilleschool.org.

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

The Underground Railroad Society of Cass County MI and the Village of Vandalia partnered for the annual Underground Railroad Days Saturday and Sunday.

St. Joseph man killed in Bertrand Township crash

By PMG STAFF

BERTRAND TOWNSHIP — A St. Joseph man was killed Sunday in a two-vehicle Bertrand Township crash, according to the Berrien County Sheriff's Office.

At approximately 7:12 p.m. deputies responded to US-12 near US-31 bypass in Bertrand Township, Berrien County, Michigan for a three-vehicle traffic crash. Upon further investigation into the crash, a 2015 Jeep Cherokee was traveling eastbound on US-12 when it sideswiped a 2013 Hyundai Sonata that had just turned eastbound onto US-12 from the northbound US-31 off ramp.

The Jeep Cherokee lost control after the initial collision, crossed the median and entered the westbound traffic lanes of US-12. A Ford F-350 was traveling westbound on US-12 and collided with the passenger side of the Jeep Cherokee. The driver of the Jeep Cherokee was ejected from the vehicle and pronounced deceased on scene.

The deceased was identified as a 57-year-old man from Saint Joseph. The two occupants from the Ford F-350 suffered non-life-threatening injuries and were transported to Memorial Hospital in South Bend, Ind. The driver of the Hyundai sedan suffered minor injuries and refused medical attention on scene. It is believed that speed was a factor in the crash.

The crash remains under investigation by the Berrien County Sheriff's Office traffic crash reconstruction unit.

FRANKLY

Tips and quips

What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip or a quip? Call Frankly at 269-687-7700 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com.

■ Car insurance in Michigan is ridiculously high. It's too expensive to drive in Michigan, which seems crazy since we used to be the automotive capital of the world.

■ Congratulations to our new Dowagiac school board members. I am excited to see you "on board."

■ Thank goodness Cass County finally did something about the animal abuse in the Pokagon Township home. How many other homes are like this in our area?

■ Like it or not, people who were here illegally paid taxes. Many of those jobs are not being filled and thus no taxes are being paid. A path to citizenship should have been considered.

■ Underground Railroad Days was a great time as always. A big thank you to everyone responsible for making it possible.

■ Wildfire smoke drifting this far seems to be becoming the norm these days.

WEATHER

Saturday: A chance of showers, with thunderstorms also possible after 11am. Mostly sunny, with a high near 87. Southwest wind 10 to 15 mph becoming northwest in the afternoon. Winds could gust as high as 25 mph. Chance of precipitation is 50 percent.

Saturday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 61. North wind 5 to 10 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.

Sunday: Sunny, with a high near 83. Northeast wind around 5 mph.

Sunday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 62.

Monday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 86.

Monday Night: Showers likely and possibly a thunderstorm. Partly cloudy, with a low around 70. Chance of precipitation is 60 percent.

Tuesday: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms before 2 p.m.. Mostly sunny, with a high near 83.

Tuesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 60.

Wednesday: Sunny, with a high near 77.

Wednesday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 56.

Thursday: Sunny, with a high near 79.

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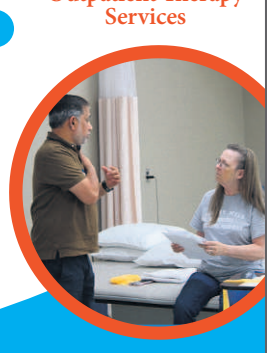
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OBITUARIES

Bill Evans

December 28, 1936 – July 10, 2026

Billy Dee Evans, age 89 years of Niles, Michigan; father, grandfather, hard worker, honorable veteran, devout Christian, and friend to many died peacefully at 3:30 p.m. on Friday, July 10, 2026 at West Woods of Niles. Although residing at West Woods for only a few months, the staff there greeted his family with affectionate comments of "Mr. Bill", and "He was my buddy", evidence of Bill's cheerful, kind, hand-shaking presence in every circumstance.

He was born on December 28, 1936, and everyone who talked to Bill more than once, knew that he was born and raised in Hayti "HEY tie", Missouri. He was one of nine children born to Elmer D. and Gaynelle (Cornett) Evans, was proud to have hand-picked cotton as a child, and attended school until 8th grade, when he was enlisted to provide care for his sister who had severe health issues. He came to Niles with some of his family when he was 16 years old, to seek a better life, and much later earned his high school diploma as an adult from Niles High School.

In Niles, Bill was first employed at the former A&P Grocery Store downtown on Second Street. In 1954, he enlisted with the Michigan Army National Guard, serving in the 2nd Tank Battalion, 246th Armored Division at its home base in Niles. He was assigned to kitchen duty, and was proud to greet and feed his fellow soldiers three-times-a-day. After serving two 3-year tours of duty, he was Honorably Discharged to the U.S.Army Reserve, where he served another two years of obligation.

Bill was then employed at the former United Dairy on Ninth Street where his gregarious personality suited him perfectly to enter new neighborhoods and sign-up new customers, creating entire new routes. In 1971, he began a career at the former Niles plant of National-Standard, where he became a production supervisor, which allowed him to meet – with a sturdy handshake – most of the folks who worked in the plant on all of the shifts. He retired in 2001, after 30 years of service, but never one to remain idle, he began part-time employment at the Halbritter Funeral Home, and its successor, Halbritter-Wickens, greeting guests at the front door for another 20 years.

Bill was a long-time member of the First Missionary Church in Niles, now Summit Church, serving in many capacities including as an usher. He was well-known for the appearance of his yard in Oak Manor, perfect edges to the lawn in the summer, and perfect edges to the cleared snow in the winter. He also carried a lawn mower in his pickup truck to maintain the lawns of several friends around Niles. He added an in-ground swimming pool to the backyard, and filled the basement with recreational items so that his daughter could entertain friends, some of whom became so comfortable there as to let themselves in, even if Anita wasn't home yet!

Many children learned how to swim in that pool, and that pool and basement became a gathering place for grandchildren and their friends, and then for the great-grandchildren. Bill was always a sports fan, bowling on area leagues when younger, cheering for the University of Notre Dame, and was a great fan of the Detroit Tigers baseball team, watching faithfully the televised games, always accompanied by popcorn.

As a young grocer, he found the lunch counter next-door at Dean's Drug Store quite convenient, and found the equally young soda-jerk, Barb quite attractive. His visits to Dean's became more frequent, and eventually, on Barb's birthday, March 3, 1956 he married the former Barbara Ann Noecker at the Assembly of God Church at 13th & East Main Streets (now Michiana Christian Embassy, and now further east on Main).

Bill and Barb lived in their home on Spansail Street most of their marriage, and spent several winters in Fruitland, Florida. They celebrated last year the remarkable Sixty-ninth anniversary of their wedding prior to Barb's death on November 22, 2025. He was also preceded in death by his parents, and by several siblings including Martha who died at 15 years old, Lorene Walker, Walter Evans, and Donna Hess; and by Barb's parents and siblings, including her brother, Roger Noecker, who was Bill's roommate at West Woods, and died just 20 days ago, on June 20, 2026.

Surviving family includes his daughter, Anita (& Orrin) Belcher of Niles; grandsons, Matthew (& Cindi) Belcher, and Jeremy (& Rhonda) Belcher; great-grandchildren, Truen, Marissa, Jedrek, the twins Ezra and Elise, and Ivan; Bill's siblings, Audrey Johnson of Saint Joseph, Michigan, Wanda McGath of San Antonio, Texas, Barbara Hoffman of Saint Joseph, and Michael Evans of Mishawaka, Indiana; several nieces and nephews; and an amazing circle of friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

The funeral service for Bill Evans will be at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, July 16, 2026 at Summit Church, 1700 West River Road in Niles with Lead Pastor Dan Miller of the church officiating. The service will conclude and move outside for the Veteran's Flag Presentation and "Taps" by the United States Army Honor Guard. The family will receive relatives and friends on Thursday at Summit, from 9:00 a.m. until 10:55 a.m.

Committal Services will be private, on Friday, at Mission Hills. Contributions in memory of Bill may be made to Summit Church, 1700 West River Road, Niles, Michigan, 49120; https://summitniles.com/home. Arrangements were completed at the Halbritter-Wickens Funeral Home, 615 East Main Street in Niles. Memories and condolences may be left at: www.halbritterwickens.com

The Bible suggests that a human life might be as much as 80 years, but when Bill's years of employment are added-up – including those youthful, cotton-picking years – he worked nearly 80 years, and found joy in doing so. He also found joy in greeting friends, and moreso in greeting his next new friend. More joy was found – more than Hayti – in his family, those great-grands, grandsons and their wives, his daughter Anita and her Orrin, and above all, Barb. All of this evidence of following the command to love people, and love God ... to Whom Bill's last words to Anita were: "I'm going to fly away".

Gaye Joanis

December 5, 1945 – July 14, 2026

Gaye Diane Joanis, age 80, of Niles, Michigan, passed away peacefully on July 14, 2026, surrounded by her loving family. She was born on December 5, 1945, in Dowagiac, Michigan, and lived a life marked by generosity, devotion, and kindness that touched the hearts of many.

She was welcomed into heaven by the loving arms of her late parents, Robert and Beulah (Harger) Hoffman, who instilled the values of hard work, family, and faith that guided her throughout her life. Gaye graduated from Dowagiac Union High School with the class of 1964, and on September 5, 1964, she married James D. Joanis in Dowagiac, Michigan. Together they shared a love of the outdoors and crafting. From hunting and fishing, to flower arrangements and woodworking, you could find them enjoying a life filled with love, companionship, and adventure.

She is survived by her husband, James D. Joanis of Niles; her daughters, Kellie Montgomery of Niles and Kimberly True and her husband Douglas of Dowagiac; her two granddaughters, Hannah Montgomery (Ken Conlee) of Mishawaka, and Layla True of Dowagiac; her two great-granddaughters, Collins and Porter Conlee; and her sister, Robin Schoetzow and her husband Tom of Dowagiac. Her family was the center of her world, and she treasured every moment spent with them. You could always find her in the stands, on the field, and at the show ring, cheering loud for her family. One of the joys of being the matriarch of a family full of girls is that she was always ready to go dress shopping, bake pies, visit farmers markets, lounge at the beach, and try her luck on the slot machines at the casino. She celebrated it all. She treasured family gatherings where she would make way too much food, share old stories, play euchre, and laughter would undoubtedly fill the room.

For many years, Gaye worked as a secretary in the banking industry, where her dependable nature and warm personality made her a valued presence. She also worked at National Standard in Niles and later retired from the Federal Marshall Services in South Bend. In every place she served, she was known for her dedication, professionalism, and the kindness she extended to others. Her work ethic reflected the strength of character that defined her life, and she approached each responsibility with care and pride.

Her faith was an important part of her life. She was a previous member of Trinity Episcopal Church in Niles and later a member of Fairland Christian Church in Niles. She found comfort and strength in her Christian beliefs, and she lived in a way that reflected compassion, humility, and trust in the Lord. Her church family and all who worshiped alongside her will remember her as a woman who was faithful in both word and deed.

Gaye gave generously to her community. She volunteered for Ronald McDonald House Charities providing meals and services, as well as, making families feel welcome and cared for in their time of need. Known as "Grandma Gaye" to women within the Miss America Organization, assisting with Miss Michigan and Miss Stateline Pageants where she could be found helping young women become the leaders of today. She was also active in the Cass County 4-H Program, where her daughters showed light horses and her granddaughters showed her beloved shelties. She was encouraging and supportive to all exhibitors and made a meaningful difference.

She had many interests that brought joy to her life and to those around her. Gaye was an animal lover and raised Shelties, and was a member of the ECHO Dog Club in Buchanan, as well as her non-official international sheltie group. She was always excited to attend their meet up events where friends quickly became like family to her. She also enjoyed hummingbirds, hunting mushrooms, and bird watching, especially from the family cabin in Baldwin, Michigan. Her sweet tooth was well known, and she will be lovingly remembered for her famous Rice Krispie Treats, which brought smiles to family and friends alike.

Memorial contributions may be made in Gaye's memory to McDonald House Michiana at 610 N Michigan Street, Suite 310, South Bend, Indiana 46601.

Funeral services will be held on Monday, July 20, 2026 at Fairland Christian Church at 1811 River Bluff Road, Niles, Michigan 49120 1:00 p.m. with Pastor Don Fleischman officiating; visitation will begin at 11:00 a.m. and an interment will take place at Silverbrook Cemetery.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Niles. www.BrownFuneralHomeNies.com.

Those who knew Gaye will remember her as funny, loving, and passionate. She had a way of making others feel welcome and cared for, and her laughter could brighten any room. She lived with a generous heart and a spirit that was both strong and tender. Her life was a blessing to her family, her church, and her community. Her memory will remain a source of comfort and gratitude.

Ruby Lee Wolverton

August 9, 1933 – July 4, 2026

Ruby Lee Wolverton peacefully departed this life on July 4, 2026. She was born on August 9, 1933, in Canton, Mississippi, to Robert C. and Georgia (Gross) Holloman, their only much-loved child.

Ruby made her home in Dowagiac, Michigan, for nearly 75 years. Soon after making Dowagiac her home, she became a devoted member of Second Baptist Church and remained faithful until the Lord called her home. Her unwavering faith was the cornerstone of her life.

Ruby dedicated many years of service as a Certified Nurse's Assistant at Dowagiac Nursing Home (now The Timbers of Cass County), where she compassionately cared for others until her retirement at the age of 62.

She was united in marriage to Walter Wolverton, who preceded her in death in 1987. She was also preceded in death by her beloved parents in 2000.

Ruby's greatest joy was her family. She leaves to cherish her loving memory her seven devoted children: Patricia Randle (Lonny), Robert Wolverton (Marilyn), Dwayne Wolverton, Adriene Rucker (Kenneth), Phyllis Wolverton, Regina Wolverton, and Douglas Wolverton.

She also leaves thirteen grandchildren: Shanee McElveen (Chris), Sean Hill (Shannon), Jerren Randle, Lakeshia Jimmerson, Elizabeth Garcia (Luis), Tyla Cosey, Julian Wolverton, Kendall Rucker, Demetrias Wolverton, Elyse Wolverton, Nicole Taylor, Lamaya Davis, and Renee Wolverton; fourteen great-grandchildren; three nieces, Eunice Murray, Mary Thurmun, and Rebecca Johnson; one nephew, Bradford Wolverton; and a host of loving great-nephews, great-nieces, cousins, dear friends, and all whose lives were touched by her love and humor.

Ruby will be remembered for her steadfast faith, her caring spirit, and her unwavering love for her family. Her legacy of compassion, strength, and devotion will continue to live on in the hearts of all who knew and loved her. Though she will be deeply missed, her memory will forever remain a source of comfort and inspiration to those blessed to have known her.

Family and friends will gather Saturday, July 18, 2026 from 10:00 a.m. until the time of her service at noon 12:00 p.m., in 2nd Baptist Church 203 South Paul Street, Dowagiac, Michigan 49047. Ruby will be laid to rest in Riverside Cemetery.

"Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come… Her children arise up, and call her blessed… A woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised."

– Proverbs 31:25, 28, 30 (KJV)

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

Death notices

Pamela J. Miller, 75, of Dowagiac, died July 7, 2026, Wagner Family Funerals, Cassopolis

Billie Bailey

May 25, 1944 – July 13, 2026

Billie Jean Bailey, 82, a lifelong resident of Dowagiac, passed away peacefully at her home on Monday morning, July 13, 2026, surrounded by the love of her family.

Born on May 25, 1944, in Dowagiac, Billie was the daughter of the late William and Annette (Kidman) Deming. She graduated from Dowagiac Union High School with the Class of 1962. On June 22, 1963, she married the love of her life, Duane Bailey, beginning a marriage built on love, devotion, and countless cherished memories together.

Faith was the foundation of Billie's life. A devoted Catholic and lifelong member of Holy Maternity of Mary Catholic Church, she faithfully attended Mass and remained devoted to her faith throughout her life. Her faith was a constant presence, quietly reflected in the way she lived and in the example, she set for her family.

For 36 years, Billie was a familiar face at Trackside Restaurant in Dowagiac, where she became much more than a waitress. She was a constant in the lives of so many, welcoming generations of customers who returned not only for a good meal, but to see Billie. Along the way, she built countless friendships with coworkers and customers alike. She carried herself with quiet grace, treated everyone with kindness and respect, and had a genuine way of making people feel remembered. To this day, nearly everyone who walked through the doors of Trackside has a Billie story to tell.

Retirement brought Billie and Duane countless days doing what they loved most, spending time together at Bailey Haven, their beloved place up north. It was there they built lasting friendships, enjoyed the peacefulness of northern Michigan, and made memories with those who became like family. They also shared a love of visiting casinos throughout Michigan and neighboring states, often making a day of it together. In their later years, their beloved cat, Pookers, quickly became the baby of the family, bringing them endless joy and companionship. Whether they were at Bailey Haven or trying their luck at the casino, they were happiest simply enjoying each other's company.

Above all else, Billie treasured her family. She was the heart of her family, and nothing brought her greater joy than having those she loved together. For generations, her Christmas Eve gatherings became a cherished family tradition, filling her home with laughter, conversation, and memories that will be treasured for years to come. Whether during the holidays or in quieter moments, Billie loved her family deeply, and the love she shared with them will remain one of her greatest legacies.

Billie will be remembered for the life she lived, the love she shared, and the countless lives she touched along the way. From the friendships she built at Trackside, to the peaceful days spent at Bailey Haven, to the cherished traditions she created with her family, her legacy will live on in the hearts of all who knew and loved her. Though she will be deeply missed, the memories she leaves behind will continue to bring comfort, laughter, and gratitude for a life so well lived.

Surviving are her husband of 63 years, Duane Bailey Sr; their three children, Lynn (Greg) Nelson, Duane Jr (Patricia) Bailey, and Kristi (Jeff) Fenimore; seven grandchildren, Torie (Mike) Winchester, Greg (Allie) Nelson, Anthony (Gabbi) Nelson, Whitney (Adam) Emerson, Kayla (Justin) Dodd, Jeffrey Fenimore and Brandi (Cameron) Polinski; nineteen great-grandchildren, Madison, Mackenzie, Macie, Maddox, Everliegh, Archer, Hudson, Clay, Obi, Violet, Maddy, Grayson, Piper, Rogan, Koda, Oakleigh, Luna, River, and Gatlin; two sisters, Bonnie Fritz and Carol (Bob) Hemmingway; and several nieces, nephews, and extended family.

Preceding her in death were her parents and three siblings, Sherry Lyons, Gail Wiggins, and James Deming.

A Memorial Mass will be celebrated at 11:00 AM on Wednesday, July 22, at Holy Maternity of Mary Catholic Church, 210 N. Front St, Dowagiac, where friends may visit with her family from 10:00 AM until the time of service.

Memorial contributions in Billie's name may be directed to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital or Corewell Health Hospice & Palliative Care.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Clark Chapel – Starks Family Funeral Homes, Dowagiac.

Those wishing to share a memory or leave condolences are invited to visit Billie's personalized webpage at www.clarkch.com.

Obituary policy

Leader Publications publishes death notices at a cost of $25, or free with obituary purchase. Extended obituaries are priced based on word count.

If there's an error because of a mistake made by the newspaper, the obituary will be reprinted at no charge.

For more information, or to submit an obituary, email obits@leaderpub.com.

See more obituaries on page A4

OBITUARIES

Arden Withers

September 5, 1944 – July 9, 2026

Arden E. Withers, 81, of Dowagiac, died peacefully in the comfort of his family's presence.

His life began September 5, 1944 in Jones, the second of three sons born to Roy and Helen Withers. He married Carolyn Meiser in Cassopolis on April 10, 1965.

Arden graduated from Cassopolis High School in 1963 where he was very active in the Future Farmers of America. Arden was a volunteer fireman and custodian at Cassopolis Public Schools before marrying Carolyn, his high-school sweet heart. He continued to work for Cassopolis Public Schools for over twenty years as a bus driver and eventually became Transportation Supervisor. Arden was then recruited to work for Lewis Cass Intermediate School District where he retired after twenty- six years. While there, he was awarded Transportation Supervisor of the year for the State of Michigan. He was responsible for founding the event, Super Days for Super Kids, which continues on to this day. Arden was very active in his community, he was a large contributor and supporter of the Cass County Fair, being a board member for nine years. He was a lifelong member of the Cass County Tractor Pullers Association. He was also well known for the Withers Choo Choo, which he made himself. Arden enjoyed camping and spending time with his family and friends. He was always willing to help others and was known for his kind heart.

Arden will be greatly missed by family and friends. He is survived by his wife, Carolyn Withers of Dowagiac; one daughter, Jennifer (Leon) Gilliam of Dowagiac; son, Jeffrey (Lisa) Withers of Cassopolis; four grandsons, Tyler (Leny) Gilliam of Edwardsburg, Taylor Gilliam of Cassopolis, Jacob Withers of Cassopolis, Justyn (Alycia) Withers of Decatur; one great grandson, Tatum Gilliam; one brother, Richard (Jean) Withers of Three Rivers; one brother-in-law, Philip (Betty) Meiser of Dowagiac; nieces and nephews, Andrea, Patty, Tom, Bruce, John, Matt, Chris, April, Adam and Collin.

He was preceded in death by his Parents; one brother, Allen Withers; sister-in-law, Ruthanne Smith and his niece, Valerie Coates.

Family and friends will gather Saturday, July 18, 2026 from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. and again Sunday July 19, 2026 one hour prior to his service at 2:00 p.m. in Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, 202 North Broadway Street, Cassopolis.

Arden will be laid to rest in Brookside (Dailey) Cemetery.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Arden be made to Cass County Council on Aging 60525 Decatur Road, Cassopolis, Michigan 49031 or Heartland Hospice 6126 Lovers Lane, Portage, Michigan 49002 or Cass County Cancer Services in care of Tom Florea 68998 Cassopolis Road, Cassopolis, Michigan 49031

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

Linda Timm

Linda Nell Stansel Timm, 75, of Lake City, Florida, peacefully passed away on July 8, 2026, after returning to the area she always called home. Born on January 10, 1951, in Wellborn, Florida, she was the daughter of Theron "Buck" and Hazel Stansel. Although she spent many years making her home in Niles, Michigan, her Florida roots always remained close to her heart.

Since the eighth grade, Linda knew she was called to become a teacher. She was a gifted and devoted educator who spent more than three decades serving students and making a difference in their lives. Throughout her career, she taught in a variety of settings, including elementary education, physical education, and special needs education with both children and adults, while also coaching high school sports early in her career.

Of all her roles, elementary education held a special place in her heart, where she found joy in helping children learn, grow, and reach their full potential. Linda generously gave of her own resources to help meet the needs of her students, ensuring they had the support and encouragement they needed to succeed. The countless students whose lives she touched were among her greatest accomplishments.

Whether in the classroom, church, or her community, Linda faithfully gave her time and talents in service to others. Over the years, she volunteered in many capacities, including teaching Sabbath School, serving on local fair committees, assisting at horse shows, and dedicating countless hours to 4-H and other activities.

Linda had a deep love for animals, especially her horse, Quinta, and her dog, Cody. She found great joy in horseback riding, tending to her yard, and spending time in the barn, often saying she would rather clean horse stalls than cook dinner. Her love of the outdoors reflected the country life she cherished growing up on the family farm.

More than anything, Linda treasured her family. She was a devoted wife, loving mother, proud grandmother, caring sister, and cherished friend. Her legacy of faith, compassion, gentle strength, and selfless love will continue to live on in the many lives she touched.

Linda is survived by her beloved husband of 55 years, Thomas Eugene Timm; her daughter, Stephanie Stansel Timmerman (Eric); and her cherished grandson, Colton Jaeger Timmerman. She is also survived by her three sisters, Jean Hunt, Bobbi Salzer (Charles), and Wanda Hogan (David); her brother, Theron "Leon" Stansel (Cindy); along with many nieces, nephews, extended family members, former students, and dear friends who will miss her deeply.

Jess Tietsort

November 25, 1972 – July 10, 2026

Jess Thomas Tietsort, 53, passed away peacefully Friday, July 10, 2026, surrounded by the love of his family. Born on November 25, 1972, Jess lived in the Cassopolis and Vandalia communities throughout his life, where he built lasting friendships and touched countless lives with his kindness, humor, and generous spirit.

Jess was the beloved husband of Redden Tietsort, with whom he built a life filled with love, laughter, and creativity. Together they started a custom apparel and gifts business, creating personalized shirts and other products while connecting with people through TikTok Live. His quick wit, infectious sense of humor, and genuine personality earned him many friends online, where people looked forward to his broadcasts and the laughter he shared.

He was the cherished son of Charles and Debbie Tietsort; a loving brother to Tony Tietsort,

Casey (Sarah) Tietsort; and a proud uncle to Elliot Tietsort, Elijah Tietsort, and Tristan Tietsort. Above all, he was a devoted father to Bret Tietsort, Hunter (Hailey) Tietsort, and Melanie Tietsort, who were the greatest source of his pride and joy.

Jess had a passion for the outdoors and could often be found hunting, searching for deer antlers, or adding to his collection of antiques. He enjoyed discovering treasures and finding beauty and history in things others might overlook.

Those who knew Jess will remember his willingness to help anyone in need. He had a heart that never hesitated to give, whether it was his time, skills, or support. His smile could brighten a room, and his laugh was so contagious that it often left everyone around him laughing until they cried. His love for his family was unwavering, and he cherished every moment spent with those he loved.

Jess leaves behind a legacy of love, laughter, generosity, and unforgettable memories. Though he will be deeply missed, his spirit will live on in the hearts of his family, friends, and the many lives he touched both in person and through the community he built online.

His family finds comfort in knowing that he passed peacefully, surrounded by those he loved most. They ask that Jess be remembered not only with sadness, but with the same laughter, kindness, and generosity that he shared so freely throughout his life.

Family and friends will gather to celebrate Jess's life Friday, July 17, 2026 from 4:00 pm until time of service at 6:00 pm in Wagner Family Funerals, 202 North Broadway Street, Cassopolis.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

Daniel Thomas

May 9, 1965 – June 17, 2026

Daniel Scott Thomas, 61, of Niles, Michigan, passed away on June 17, 2026.

Born on May 9, 1965, in Niles, Michigan, Daniel was the son of Arlene (McIntyre) Thomas and the late Edwin Thomas.

In addition to his father, Daniel was preceded in death by family members who welcomed him into eternal rest. He is survived by his loving mother, Arlene Thomas; his brothers, Gary Thomas and David (Kathy) Thomas; as well as many aunts, uncles, cousins, and extended family members who will forever cherish his memory.

Daniel graduated from Niles High School in 1983 and went on to study Electronics at DeVry University. He dedicated many years of service to Accra Pac in Elkhart, Indiana.

Daniel had a deep appreciation for life's simple pleasures. He especially enjoyed spending time on Baldwin Lake in Union, Michigan, where many of his happiest moments were spent cruising on his pontoon boat alongside Captain Billy, his beloved dog and faithful companion, by his side. Whether relaxing on the water, enjoying the sunshine, or sharing time with family and friends, Daniel found peace and happiness at the lake.

A lifelong sports enthusiast, Daniel was a devoted fan of the Chicago Cubs and Notre Dame athletics and rarely missed an opportunity to cheer on his favorite teams. Daniel also had a unique passion for collecting antique telephones, preserving and restoring pieces of history through his collection. In his younger years, he took great pride in his 1967 Camaro, a car that brought him much joy and reflected his appreciation for classic automobiles.

Above all, Daniel will be remembered for his love of family, his many interests and hobbies, and the lasting memories he created with those fortunate enough to know him. His presence will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered by all who knew and loved him.

No services will be held at this time.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Andrea Lyn Bergenham

October 1, 1968 – June 30, 2026

Andrea Lyn Bergenham, age 57, of Niles, was called home to heaven Tuesday, June 30, 2026, after a courageous battle against cancer and kidney disease, surrounded by family.

She was born October 1, 1968, in Michigan City, Indiana to James Noveroske and Donna (Bryant) Taylor. She spent her youth in Enterprise, Alabama, and Michigan City, Indiana, where she graduated from Rogers High School in 1987. She went on to proudly serve her country in the U.S. Air Force until 1992. In 1994, she graduated from Indiana Business College in Muncie, Indiana.

Andrea worked at Meijer for a number of years, where she met her future husband, Stephan Bergenham. They married in Yorkville, Illinois, in 2003 and later proudly welcomed two daughters, Gabriela Bergenham (2005) and Ericka Bergenham (2006). Andrea was a devoted wife and mother who loved her family deeply. She never missed a work dinner, game, or any chance to be there for the people in her life – especially for her daughters' friends. Andrea loved unconditionally and shared that love everywhere she went. She was a dog-lover who treated her pets as part of the family.

Later in life, Andrea discovered a passion for reworking and restoring furniture, remaking discarded items into beautiful pieces of art. She was a die-hard Alabama football fan (Roll Tide!), Detroit Red Wings fan, and a loyal supporter of all the kids in Brandywine (Niles) sports programs. Andrea was a hard-working, driven, passionate woman who never gave up on anything. She was a loving wife, mother, daughter, sister, and aunt who made a lasting impact on every person lucky enough to be in her life.

She is survived by and will be lovingly remembered by her husband of twenty-three years, Stephan; daughters, Gabriela (Abby), Ericka; mother, Donna; brothers, Mark (Kristi) Noveroske, Kevin (Amber) Prueter; and her nieces and nephews.

Family and friends will gather to celebrate Andrea's life on a date and at a time to be announced.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritterwickens.com.

Obituary policy

Leader Publications publishes death notices at a cost of $25, or free with obituary purchase. Extended obituaries are priced based on word count. If there's an error because of a mistake made by the newspaper, the obituary will be reprinted at no charge. For more information, or to submit an obituary, email obits@leaderpub.com.

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Brandywine tabs Lezotte as new superintendent

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Correspondent

NILES — There was nothing but applause, hugs and good wishes for Brandywine Assistant Superintendent Amanda Lezotte Monday night as Brandywine Board of Education members unanimously chose her to be the district's next superintendent.

Lezotte was one of six candidates interviewed by board members last week and was the top choice of board members at the end of those interviews. She and Watervliet Curriculum Director Brandon Waggoner were initially invited back for a second round of interviews this week but Waggoner withdrew his application last Wednesday.

Monday's meeting featured Lezotte's presentation for her plans for her first 90 to 100 days as superintendent and was followed by the board's vote to officially offer her the superintendent's job. Pending successful contract negotiations, Lezotte is expected to start her new duties Aug. 1.

She succeeds Travis Walker who resigned last month to take the superintendent job for the Ludington school district in northern Michigan. Walker had been the Brandywine superintendent since 2022 and previously served as the middle/high school principal. He is a native of Manistee, Mich.

Lezotte is no stranger to the Brandywine district. She taught middle and high school English and History at Brandywine for 11 and a half years before going to Berrien RESA to be a consultant for three years. She came back to Brandywine a number of years ago as the director of state and federal programs before becoming the assistant superintendent for instruction and programs in 2023.

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

Amanda Lezotte was offered the position of Brandywine Community Schools superintendent following the final round of interviews Monday.

Lezotte began her presentation on a personal note, offering information board members and staff may not know about her as she told about her childhood and paid tribute to her parents, grandparents, husband and children as well as the teachers who served as mentors to her over the years.

She then outlined her plans for her first 90 to 100 days as superintendent. She spoke about her plans in seven areas: listening tours and relationship building, the bond projects and budget, communication and transparency, staffing, the start of school, student behavior, and well-being and personal growth.

"I'm not new to the district but I haven't interacted that much with the CTE programs, transportation, maintenance and food service," she said. "I also to talk to stakeholders at a forum about student behavior and well-being and meet with the Berrien RESA superintendent and assistant superintendent. I plan to meet individually with board members, administrators and the finance team."

Lezotte said her focus will then shift to the start of school and meeting with students, parents and staff. With the $22 million bond projects and the budget, she wants to meet with the architects and contractors as well as the district's auditors. Community wise, she wants to be visible at community events and join local service clubs.

She also gave her take on staffing needs in the district. She said she plans to hire someone for her current assistant superintendent position as well as hire a dean of students or assistant principal for the elementary school. In addition, she plans to use other state funds to hire more behavior intervention specialists.

As for her own professional development, she said she will attend the Berrien County Superintendent Retreat July 29-30, find another superintendent to be her mentor and enroll in a superintendent's academy.

Lezotte's presentation concluded with her analysis of how she fits the superintendent profile the board developed with input from staff, students, parents and community members. That profile listed characteristics such as being highly visible and relationship oriented, communicating clearly and transparently, building trust and fostering a cohesive culture, giving students a voice and demonstrating strong instructional leadership.

She said she plans to be visible in the schools and the community and called her willingness to accept feedback one of her strong suits. "I plan on leading collaboratively and invite people to the table," she said. 'I'm more of an open door person."

"I very much appreciate this opportunity," Lezotte said after the board voted to appoint her as superintendent. "I am so honored that you have chosen me, I'm not taking it for granted."

Interim Superintendent Elise Sorensen gave a brief update about the bond projects at the start of the meeting. She said that some projects have been done such as creating secure entrances at district buildings but that there have a few "hiccups" with the new CTE center which will delay that opening from December to March.

HEIT

From page A1

with a concentration in criminal justice. He also owned a boat cleaning business in New Buffalo from 1988-89.

While at CMU, he worked summers as a patrol officer for the Berrien County Sheriff's Department Marine Division.

In 1992, he left CMU to go to the police academy in Kalamazoo.

He then was hired as a patrol officer in Buchanan, and ultimately served as chief of police there from February 1993 to 1999. At the same time, he was hired into the Berrien County Sheriff's Department, where he worked first as a jail deputy, then a road patrol deputy and served on the sheriff's tactical response unit.

In May 1999, he was hired as chief of police in New Buffalo, where he served until May 2002, when he returned to the Berrien County Sheriff's Department as a deputy.

"I was drawn to Berrien County due to the retirement benefits," he said.

In early 2003, then-Sheriff Paul Bailey appointed Heit to be the undersheriff, a position he held for 21 years.

At the end of 2023, when Bailey retired with one year left of his four-year term, Heit was appointed to serve the last year of Bailey's time by a committee consisting of the county prosecutor, clerk and chief probate judge.

He was officially elected sheriff in November of 2024, and took office Jan. 1, 2025.

He oversees 163 sworn police officers, 17 civilian employees and five animal control officers.

"I am honored to serve along with these great men and women who do their best every day," Heit said.

When asked to share his best and worst day on the job, he said, "All days are good, some better than others."

Heit said pinpointing his worst day, he could easily say it was July 11, 2016, the day Court Security Supervisor Joe Zangaro and security officer Ronald Kienzle were shot and killed during an incident at the Berrien County Courthouse.

He said one of his most memorable days was when, during a traffic stop on I-94 in Lake Township, police found $96,000 that was determined to be drug money.

"I learned how to count small bills totaling $96,000," Heit said.

Besides covering all of Berrien County in general, the sheriff's department has contracts with Watervliet Township, New Buffalo Township and Niles Township to provide police coverage. He said Niles Township is the busiest, in terms of the number of calls for services.

He attributes that to heavy traffic coming across the state line from Indiana to Michigan, in part because of marijuana dispensaries.

"It's mainly traffic issues, not big issues involving violent criminal violations," he said.

Asked what is the biggest change he has seen in police work since the start of his career, Heit said body-worn cameras and technology in general. He said that is a good thing, because it provides more information than ever.

Besides his law enforcement career, he has served 21 years on the New Buffalo school board. His wife, Michelle Heit, is New Buffalo Township supervisor. They have three grown children and four grandchildren, which Heit said are the biggest joy of his life. His daughter, Alexandra, is a felony probation officer; daughter Kyra is a dental hygienist, and son David is a wildlife biologist.

Heit said his hobbies include deer hunting, playing pickleball and having family time.

"I would play pickleball every day if I could, but obviously my schedule does not allow for that," he said.

When asked whether given the chance, he would do it all again, Heit says "absolutely."

"Nationally, police may not get a lot of support, but here in Berrien County we are very fortunate to have total support, and it's an honor to serve," he said. "I look at law enforcement as a calling."

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Groups team up for voting information

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — A pair of local organizations are teaming up to help community members access voting information and resources.

The Niles-Buchanan chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the League of Women Voters of Berrien and Cass Counties will be hosting voting information sessions at area churches as the Aug. 4 primary election approaches. The two organizations visited Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Niles to answer questions and let people know where to access information regarding voter registration, find polling places, candidates and more.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization that protects and expands voting rights and ensures everyone is represented in our democracy. The League neither endorses nor opposes candidates or political parties and aims to empower voters and defend democracy through advocacy and education.

"The League of Women Voters is all about voting and voting rights, so this is part of our core mission," said League of Women Voters/Voter Services Chair Beverly Gray. "It is one of my core missions to make sure that people have information about how to register, to really encourage voter registrations."

Gray said that at 411vote.org, Michigan residents can check voter registration, find polling places, learn about candidates and more.

"I feel like some people might not know it's easier than they think it is to get involved," she said.

"They don't realize that it's pretty easy. In Michigan, you can just do it online. I think that's the biggest misconception. Everybody's votes count. Collectively, we as voters have power."

Founded in 1909, the NAACP is an interracial endeavor striving to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination.

The NAACP Niles chapter began in March 1942 and had been a voice for human equality by addressing local issues through advocacy and communication, as well as sought to educate members and the public on history and current concerns. The chapter was dissolved in 2018 due to low participation before being revived in 2024 by Chapter President Beverly Woodson.

"Your one vote does count, and that is why we are doing this," Woodson said. "People died for this right, so don't give it to them.

We have given out the information, we have allowed individuals to ask questions, and we try very hard to answer those questions. It is so important today. I feel that it has been a long time. We want some normalcy and we still want to be able to have democracy. We want our children to understand that we live in a free country and we need to vote. I'm passionate about it, and that's why we do what we do."

For more voting information, visit vote411.org.

FIREHOUSE

From page A1

conducting a training exercise.

The Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation administers the grant program which is open to first responders and public safety organizations across the United States. Grants have been awarded for a number of projects including acquiring lifesaving equipment. Grant funding comes not only from Firehouse Subs but other individual and business donors.

Jeff and Tammie Williams own the Niles and Mishawaka Firehouse Subs restaurants and have handed out checks not only to the Niles Fire Department but also a number of other area departments over the last few years. They noted that the foundation has also awarded grants to other entities including police, schools and veterans organizations.

Jeff Williams said that Firehouse Subs' dedication and support of local communities was one reason why they decided to be part of the company. "Departments always have something they need that's not in the budget," he said. "That's one reason why we got involved with Firehouse Subs. We also have great customer support. We're so proud to be involved."

Firefighter Tyler Burks was the driving force behind applying for and getting the new grant for the Niles Fire Department. He began researching information about what they needed last November and submitted the application and accompanying materials including quotes for the costs of the items the day the application window opened on Jan. 8.

Burks' efforts resulted in the department receiving a $32,092 grant to buy a rescue sled, 10 Swiftwater dry suits, six Mustang ice commanders, 16 helmets, six NRS rapid rescuers and accessories. He described the items as gear, bags, flotation devices and ice water rescue rafts.

This was the first time Burks wrote a grant application but he had the example of both his father and grandfather before him who have obtained grants for area fire departments.

His father, Corey Burks, is retired from the Berrien County Sheriff's Office and has been able to get grants for the Berrien Springs-Oronoko Township Fire Department where he is a firefighter. His grandfather, Bruce Stover, is the retired BSOT Fire Chief and has obtained a number of grants over the years for his and other departments.

Niles Fire Chief Jeremy Connell said that getting the grant will help his department.

"It's an amazing opportunity to be able to get gear that we wouldn't normally get," he said. "It's an excellent opportunity to replace gear that is outdated and close to being out of service. Otherwise, we would have to raise funds and save up money to get the gear."

Connell said that people likely don't understand the need for the cold water gear on summer days when the temperature hits the 90s.

"Even on hot days, the water can be cold and the dry suits keep them warm so they don't suffer from hypothermia," he said.

He thanked the Williams for their support of area departments.

"We can't do what we do without you," he said. "We would be walking around with suits that have holes in them."

He said Niles firefighters do water rescue training on the St. Joseph River off of Marmont Street as well as on the Dowagiac River off of Pucker Street. In addition, they join with other area firefighters attend technical rescue school training on the East Race in South Bend.

Connell said everyone on the Niles fire department are either certified in water rescue or soon will be. The department currently has 10 full time firefighters and numerous reserve officers. He said nearly all of the full time firefighters are certified in water rescue while some of the reserve officers are as well.

He and firefighter Zach Hoetger noted that the support teams are also important when it comes to water rescue as they are able to move equipment, throw ropes and manage lines and use tools. Hoetger said people are trained in shore operations, basic boat operations and technical operations.

In addition to this grant, the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation has provided grants to fire departments in Berrien Springs-Oronoko Township, Buchanan Township, Bertrand Township, Dowagiac, Howard Township, Indian Lake and Royalton Township in recent years. Another new grant was just approved for Weesaw Township near Three Oaks.

APPLE

From page A1

If the focus of ARK Capital's plans change after April 30, 2027, city staff will resume marketing the property for redevelopment.

In further business, council:

■ Authorized the Fire Department to purchase one Lifepak 15 Biphasic Pacing AED from Coast Biomedical of Vista, California at a cost of $14,999.00, which is being covered by a local foundation.

■ Approved the Non-Exclusive Utility Easement between the City of Niles and Riverfront Park Resort, LLC for the underground boring of a sewer forced main.

■ Authorized the History Center to accept the quote from Christman Custom Painting of Mishawaka, Indiana for painting the Chapin Mansion porch and railings at a cost of $6,000, which is being covered by a private foundation.

■ Approved by resolution the appointment of Zach Holt as the Street Administrator for the City of Niles

■ Approved the request of Niles DDA Main Street to hold Coffee and Car Shows on July 19 and Sept.ember 5 and specifically closing three parking lots and additional parking spaces in the 200 block of Sycamore Street.

Planning commission conversation

During the public comment portion of the City Council meeting, Niles resident Anthony Briand discussed what he believed was an Open Meetings Act issue involving the city's June 24 Planning Commission meeting.

Briand alleged that the Planning Commission had violated the Open Meetings Act because a door was locked when he attempted to enter the meeting. In a social media post after the meeting, Briand expressed frustration that the council did not respond to his concerns.

"As is our normal practice, the Council did not engage in a back-and-forth discussion during public comment," stated Mayor Nick Shelton on a Facebook post addressing the issue. "Public comment is an opportunity for residents to address the governing body. It is not intended to be a debate or question-and-answer session. If Council responded individually to every speaker during public comment, our meetings would quickly become unmanageable and it would be unfair to other residents waiting to speak."

During his Mayor's Report, Shelton asked City Administrator Ric Huff to address the Planning Commission door incident so the public could hear the city's explanation. Huff said that the issue involved an interior vestibule door, not the exterior entrance to City Hall.

"The City had installed a new building security system the week before," Shelton stated in his Facebook post. "The new system requires a different after-hours procedure to keep the interior vestibule unlocked. Staff attending the meeting were unfamiliar with that new procedure and were unaware that the interior door had remained locked. After hearing those concerns, staff reviewed the building security footage to better understand exactly what occurred."

The Planning Commission meeting began in the first-floor conference room at 5:30 p.m. June 24. According to the building's security footage, Briand entered City Hall through the exterior entrance at 5:35 p.m. and went upstairs before returning to the first floor. He arrived at the interior glass vestibule leading to the conference room at 5:36 p.m., found the interior door locked and knocked. At 5:37 p.m., City Clerk Tina Bergman opened the door and admitted him.

While the scheduled public comment period had already ended, the Planning Commission Chair Brian Thomas modified the agenda and allowed him to address the Commission at 5:38 p.m.

"Immediately after the meeting, the constituent emailed the City stating that he 'ran a little late' and 'had almost missed my time to speak,' while thanking the Planning Commission for allowing him to be heard," Shelton stated.

Data center discussion

After the city council meeting concluded, the Committee of the Whole discussed data centers, the city's zoning ordinance and how those regulations apply in Niles.

According to Huff, a data center would only be permitted within the Industrial Zoning District and would require Special Land Use approval. The process allows the Planning Commission to evaluate issues such as lighting, noise, water usage, sewer capacity, traffic and other site-specific impacts and to impose reasonable conditions where appropriate. The city has also asked its zoning consultant to review the ordinance to confirm it addresses these types of projects.

Based on the city's current infrastructure, Shelton stated that while a large hyperscale data center is unlikely in Niles, any proposal that met the zoning requirements would still go through the established public review process.

SIDEWALK

From page A1

Cullum for his dedication and professionalism in advancing courteous and quality code enforcement to the Buchanan community.

As for National Night Out, Burnett noted that the Buchanan community has hosted the event for many years. He said it gives the city and the police department the opportunity to come together with the community to have a good time. He said there will be food, a bounce house, music and a dunk tank.

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Sports

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Here are the players with Michigan ties who were taken in MLB Draft

By TONY PAUL
The Detroit News (TNS)

There were 613 players selected in the 2026 Major League Baseball Draft, and at least 14 have ties to Michigan.

Leading the way was center fielder Brayden Dowd, who was a third-round pick by the Arizona Diamondbacks. Dowd was selected 88th overall out of Florida State. He starred in high school at Birmingham Brother Rice.

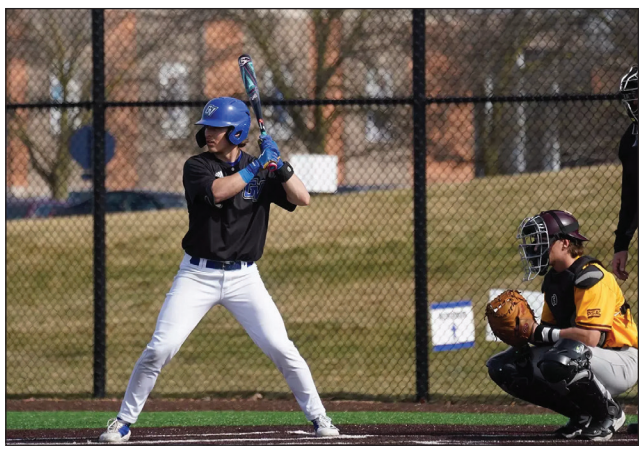
Dowd was ranked the 178th-best prospect in this year's draft class, according to MLB.com. The bonus value for Down's draft slot is $915,100.

The Diamondbacks were intrigued by his ability to get on-base. He had a .456 OBP during his junior season in 2026. He also showed some pop, with 10 home runs and a .527 slugging percentage, swinging from the left side. He started his college career at Southern California, before transferring to Florida State before the 2026 season.

"We think there's sneaky power in there," Ian Rebhan, Diamondbacks scouting director, told reporters in Arizona. "He did show the ability to slug a little bit. We think there's more untapped potential in the power there.

"He's just a really instinctual player, both in the box and in center field."

See **DRAFT**, page B2



Grand Valley State Athletics

Grand Valley State University baseball player Evan Morrison was selected in the 10th round of the MLB Draft.

Football summer school

High school teams gather for 7-on-7 scrimmages

By RON HARAMIA
Paxton Media Group

STEVENSVILLE — The term "dog days of summer" is reserved for August in Major League Baseball, when the grind of having played the bulk of the 162 scheduled regular-season games, plus enduring a long stretch of hot weather, takes it toll physically and mentally.

The playoffs are on the horizon, but the challenge is getting there.

The high school football schedule can be a grind too. On Aug. 10, area teams will begin official practice, but the truth is, teams have been working toward the 2026 season since the spring and even earlier in some cases.

Summer for high football players means weight lifting and a couple of practices each week. The MHSAA has rules in place that limit offseason practices – which coaches acknowledge is a good thing – but a stable high school football program will have something going on for most of the calendar year.

"We've got a lot of lifting and some basic stuff in (in the spring) and now we're excited about the summer," said first-year Lakeshore coach Mark Frey.

One way football coaches break up the summer routine is by playing 7-on-7 scrimmages against other schools, and that's exactly what has been – and will continue – taking place every Tuesday evening at Lakeshore High School in July.

Nine schools were invited to participate and anywhere from six to nine have shown up each week. On Tuesday, the teams were Lakeshore, Dowagiac, Watervliet, Benton Harbor, South Haven, Edwardsburg and Buchanan.

Three scrimmages took place simultaneously, each using half of the field (the soccer field was also used). The teams played for about 20 minutes (running clock), then took an eight-minute break.

There was a rotating schedule with most teams getting in four scrimmages over the two hours. Some schools even brought JV teams as well.

"I like to get the community together, these coaches that I know from playing against them or coaching with them," added Frey. "It's great to get out here and having some competition to get better. Seven on seven isn't realistic football, we know, but it's still fun to get out there and have the kids run around. It keeps the kids engaged, especially on the hot days."

See **FOOTBALL**, page B2

Photos by Don Campbell / HP staff

Lakeshore's Drake Gibson pulls in a reception against Dowagiac during a 7-on-7 scrimmage Tuesday night at Lakeshore.

Michigan regents don't cover future of Manuel

By SARAH ATWOOD
The Detroit News (TNS)

TRAVERSE CITY — The University of Michigan Board of Regents met Thursday, but didn't discuss the $12 million investigation into the culture of the scandal-ridden athletics department or the future of athletic director Warde Manuel.

After the meeting, the board went on a "private retreat" where no reporters were allowed. "Nothing related to the athletics investigation or Warde Manuel's future is taking place" during the retreat, said Paul Corliss, Michigan's assistant vice president for public affairs and internal communications.

Instead, University of Michigan Board Chair Michael Behm told The Detroit News on Thursday that while there was no extensive report on the Jenner & Block investigation into the university's athletic department to release, the university planned to disseminate the law firm's recommendations to the public.

Behm said the university is concerned with how to protect the identities of those who spoke to the investigators and that readers might be able to determine who was being referenced even if names were withheld.

Corliss told The News earlier in the week that, to his knowledge, no physical investigative report existed, and there were no plans to discuss Manuel or the investigation at the Thursday board meeting.

The Detroit News has requested the correspondence between the Jenner & Block law firm and the board over this investigation. The university has not yet responded to this request.

See **REGENTS**, page B2

Carlos Osorio / AP

The then-Detroit Red Wings executive VP/general manager Steve Yzerman speaks to the media on April 19, 2024, in Detroit.

Yzerman abruptly steps down as Red Wings GM

By STEPHEN WHYNO
AP Hockey Writer

Steve Yzerman abruptly stepped down as general manager of the Detroit Red Wings on Wednesday, a stunning midsummer change by a franchise great leaving the job after seven seasons and zero playoff appearances.

Yzerman's transition to an advisory role to owner and CEO Chris Ilitch comes several weeks after captain and No. 1 center Dylan Larkin's trade request came to light. The Red Wings' decade-long playoff drought is the longest in the storied history of the organization and the longest active drought in the NHL.

The team said its search for a new head of hockey operations has begun and that Yzerman will continue to be in charge on a day-to-day basis until his successor is determined.

"Clearly, we are not where we and our fans expect to be as an organization," Ilitch said in a statement. "Steve's lifetime of contributions to the Red Wings has meant more to this franchise than words can truly express, and I have the highest level of respect for his continued commitment to our organization."

Yzerman spent his entire 22-year Hall of Fame playing career with Detroit from 1983-2006, captaining it to the Stanley Cup three times. He has the three highest-scoring seasons in franchise history and is second only to Gordie Howe on the Red Wings' all-time points list.

See **YZERMAN**, page B2

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DRAFT

From page B1

Dowd is the 11th former Brother Rice star to be selected in the MLB Draft, and the first since outfielder Nick Plummer was taken in the first round by the St. Louis Cardinals in 2015. Brother Rice also produced DJ LeMahieu, a three-time All-Star, two-time batting champion and four-time Gold Glove winner.

Three players from Michigan colleges and Michigan high schools were taken in the 2026 draft, including Michigan State right-hander Nolan Higgins, who was selected in the fifth round by the Toronto Blue Jays. Higgins played at Orchard Lake St. Mary's. His slot value is $421,300.

Olivet right-hander Bryan Carney, a former Grosse Pointe North standout, went in the seventh round to the Houston Astros, who also drafted Michigan catcher Noah Miller (Monroe) in the 20th and final round. His slot value is $285,400.

The Astros have a history of finding talent in the Metro Detroit pipeline. In 2019, they drafted right-hander Hunter Brown in the fifth round out of St. Clair Shores Lakeview High School and Division II Wayne State.

This time, the Astros went mining for gold at DIII level and unearthed Carney, who was the first Olivet player ever to earn first-team All-America honors from D3Baseball.com. According to BaseballReference.com, he's the second Olivet player ever drafted. He joins ex-Tigers pitcher Vern Ruhle (17th round, 1972). In 73.1 innings over 11 starts this past season, Carney had 122 strikeouts and 17 walks. He had a 1.35 ERA and 0.79 WHIP.

Among the Metro Detroit players drafted was right-hander Tyler Kapa, who went in the 14th round to the Miami Marlins. The Waterford Kettering alum played collegiately at Virginia.

Draft picks have until 5 p.m. July 27 to sign a contract.

Local MLB Draft picks

■ Third round, Diamondbacks: Brayden Dowd, OF, 5-10/180, Florida State (Birmingham Brother Rice)

■ Fifth, Blue Jays: Nolan Higgins, RHP, 6-4/215, Michigan State (Orchard Lake St. Mary's)

■ Seventh, Astros: Bryan Carney, RHP, 6-6/210, Olivet (Grosse Pointe North)

■ Eighth, Astros: Aaron Piasecki, SS, 5-10/187, Troy (Muskegon Mona Shores)

■ Eighth, Phillies: Wyatt Danilowicz, LHP, 6-10/210, Louisville (Traverse City West)

■ 10th, Nationals: Nick Williams, OF, 6-0/195, Michigan State

■ 10th, Athletics: Dominic Mauro, RHP, 6-10/210, Cincinnati (Davison)

■ 10th, Rangers: Evan Morrison, SS, 5-1½00, Grand Valley State

■ 11th, Phillies: Drew Titsworth, RHP, 6-3/215, Clemson (Frankenmuth)

■ 12th, Rockies: Garrett Brewer, LHP, 6-3/181, Auburn (Berrien Springs)

■ 12th, Twins: Colby Turner, 2B, 6-0/205, Michigan

■ 14th, Marlins: Tyler Kapa, RHP, 6-2/195, Virginia (Waterford Kettering)

■ 17th, Giants: Tanner Mally, OF, 6-0/185, Western Michigan

■ 19th, Astros: Noah Miller, C, 6-0/200, Michigan (Monroe)

Detroit's Sewell voted as NFL's top OT by AP

By JOSH DUBOW
AP Pro Football Writer

Penei Sewell has long been known as perhaps the top run-blocking tackle in the NFL. Once his work in pass protection took a step up, he moved himself into a different category.

The improvement in pass protection by Sewell last season, when he was named an All-Pro for the third straight season, helped him earn the honors as the top tackle in the NFL by The Associated Press.

A panel of eight AP Pro Football Writers ranked the top five players at tackle, basing selections on current status entering the 2026 season. First-place votes were worth 10 points. Second- through fifth-place votes were worth 5, 3, 2, and 1 points.

Sewell got three first-place votes and won the voting with 55 points. Tampa Bay's Tristan Wirfs got three first-place votes and finished second with 44 points. Denver's Garett Bolles got the other two first-place votes and came in third with 28 points. San Francisco's Trent Williams was fourth, and Philadelphia's Jordan Mailata was fifth.

Philadelphia's Lane Johnson, Washington's Laremy Tunsil, the Chargers' Rashawn Slater, the Giants' Andrew Thomas, and Chicago's Darnell Wright also received votes.

1. Penei Sewell, Detroit Lions

Sewell allowed pressure on just 3.3 percent of pass plays last season, according to Pro Football Focus, to rank second among right tackles and fifth among all tackles. He was also the game's top run blocker at tackle as a key part of the running game for the Lions. Sewell's strong overall play helped him win the award as the top protector in the league last season from PFF.

SEWELL

After spending most of his first five seasons playing on the right side, Sewell will return to his college spot at left tackle this season as Detroit wants him protecting Jared Goff's blindside.

2. Tristan Wirfs, Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Wirfs made the switch from right side to left side in 2023 and became the first player to be an All-Pro at both spots since the AP began separating the positions in 2016.

Wirfs has excelled at both run and pass blocking over his career and has made the Pro Bowl in five straight seasons. He missed the start of last season recovering from a knee injury, but quickly got back to his usual form.

3. Garett Bolles, Denver Broncos

Bolles entered the NFL as a first-round pick in 2017 and took a little time to develop into a top tackle. But Bolles has been the anchor of one of the top offensive lines the past few years in Denver and earned All-Pro honors for the first time in 2025.

Bolles allowed no sacks and only 19 pressures during the 2025 regular season, according to PFF.

4. Trent Williams, San Francisco 49ers

Williams still performed at a high level last season at age 37 as he bounced back from an injury-plagued 2024 to help San Francisco get back to the playoffs. Williams is coming off his 12th Pro Bowl season – the most for any offensive tackle – and is two shy of tying Hall of Famer Bruce Matthews' record for an offensive lineman.

Williams made three straight All-Pro teams from 2021-23 before the injuries limited him to 10 games in 2024. He was healthy for most of last season, playing 16 games for the first time since 2013 when he once again was a dominant run blocker.

His pass blocking dropped off a bit with his 40 pressures allowed the most since his rookie season with Washington in 2010, according to PFF, but he remains a top player at his position.

5. Jordan Mailata, Philadelphia Eagles

Mailata is one of the best development stories in the modern NFL. The former Australian rugby star had never played American football before the Eagles drafted him in the seventh round in 2018. Under offensive line coach Jeff Stoutland's guidance, he's become one of the best in the game.

Mailata earned second-team All-Pro honors in 2024 and has been a steadying force on one of the more consistent lines in the NFL.

World Cup final is set, with Argentina facing Spain

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

The best offense. The best defense.

The World Cup final is set, and fittingly, a clash of styles awaits. Lionel Messi – the most prolific goal scorer in the tournament's history – and defending champion Argentina will take on Spain's defensive juggernaut on Sunday in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

Spain beat France in one semifinal on Tuesday; Argentina, the comeback king of this tournament, rallied to beat England 2-1 in the other semifinal on Wednesday.

Argentina is seeking its fourth title and is looking to become the first back-to-back World Cup champion since Brazil pulled off the feat in 1958 and 1962. Spain is looking for its second title, after winning in 2010.

Argentina leads the tournament in goals scored – 19.

Spain leads the tournament in fewest goals allowed – one.

Something will have to give on Sunday, when the biggest World Cup ever – a 48-team, 104-match extravaganza spread out over the U.S., Canada and Mexico – comes to an end.

It's not Finalissima. It's going to be better.

South American champion Argentina and European champion Spain were supposed to meet in Doha, Qatar, in late March in Finalissima, a showdown between the teams led by Messi and Lamine Yamal in a prequel of the World Cup.

That game never happened. Security became an issue because of unrest in the Middle East, with Iran intensifying its attacks on neighboring countries at that time in retaliation to the aerial attacks by United States and Israel in a war that is still ongoing. The game was called off.

So, instead of playing at Lusail Stadium, the site of the epic 2022 World Cup final where Messi and Argentina won on penalty kicks over France and Kylian Mbappé, they'll play just outside of New York in soccer's biggest game.

It'll be a showdown of soccer's present versus soccer's future, not to mention a showdown of the teams that held the top two spots in FIFA's world rankings entering the World Cup – Argentina at No. 1, Spain at No. 2.

There was a famous photo taken in 2007 when Messi was part of a UNICEF program and posed with a baby.

Yamal was that baby. Like Messi (who now plays for Inter Miami), Yamal would become a left-footed star for Spanish club Barcelona. It is the most improbable of stories: From a photo together two decades ago, the two stars are set to be together again to end this year's World Cup.

A picture-perfect finish.

How Spain got here

■ Record: Six wins, one draw, zero losses.

■ Goals for: 13.

■ Goals against: 1.

■ Group stage: drew with Cape Verde 0-0, beat Saudi Arabia 4-0, beat Uruguay 1-0.

■ Knockout stage: beat Austria 3-0, beat Portugal 1-0, beat Belgium 2-1, beat France 2-0.

How Argentina got here

Record: Seven wins, zero draws, zero losses.

Goals for: 19.

Goals against: 7.

Group stage: beat Algeria 3-0, beat Austria 2-0, beat Jordan 3-1.

Knockout stage: beat Cape Verde 3-2, beat Egypt 3-2, beat Switzerland 3-1, beat England 2-1.

Streaking

Both teams enter the final with impressive unbeaten streaks.

■ Spain is carrying a 37-match unbeaten streak across all competitions and friendlies into the final, having won 28 of those matches with nine draws. Its last loss was 1-0 to Colombia in March 2024.

■ Argentina is unbeaten in its last 13 World Cup matches, with 11 victories and two draws since falling to Saudi Arabia to open group play at the 2022 tournament.

The odds

Spain (+120) has been installed as the early favorite over Argentina (+275). Odds for a draw were quickly set at +200, and it's reasonable to think all those numbers could change considerably before the title matchup.

FOOTBALL

From page B1

With 7-on-7, it's like backyard football in many ways. There is no line play. The offense is the quarterback, running back(s), tight end(s) and receivers. The defense is made up of linebackers and defensive backs. Every play is a pass and it's one-hand touch to stop the play.

There is no tackling, but sometimes a player's momentum – cough, cough – might just bring the ball carrier down.

If you like offense – and passing in particular – 7-on-7 is fun to watch and play.

"It is fun and I like to compete," said Lakeshore senior Jonah Chavez, who will play his third year of varsity for the Lancers this fall. "Trying to win while still learning and knowing that you can make those mistakes without the pressure being on is really nice. We're getting used to the new playbook and it helps us get ready for the season."

Benton Harbor's Isaiah Cornelius passes against Watervliet during a 7-on-7 scrimmage Tuesday night at Lakeshore High School.

Once the month is over, Lakeshore will have a team camp, take a week off, then begin "official" practices like everyone else.

Contact Ron Haramia at rharamia @thehp.com

Photos by Don Campbell / HP staff

Lakeshore coach Mark Frey watches as Kaden Griffiths passes during a 7-on-7 football scrimmage Tuesday night at Lakeshore High School.

YZERMAN

From page B1

"This organization has given me incredible opportunities, from my time as a player to the privilege of returning as general manager," Yzerman said. "My commitment to the Red Wings and this community will never waver, and I look forward to supporting the organization in whatever role is needed to achieve our collective goals."

But he did not get hired just for his on-ice performance. Yzerman was an accomplished GM with Tampa Bay, building the core group of players and leadership that eventually won back-to-back championships. He took over in Detroit in 2019, where success on the ice has not materialized.

Yzerman's moves or lack thereof have contributed to the struggles, including failing to adequately address goaltending. Trading Tyler Bertuzzi to Boston and Filip Hronek to Vancouver for draft picks at the trade deadline in March 2023 and giving up a second-rounder to unload Jake Walman on a deal with San Jose 15 months later are among the questionable decisions.

Larkin also criticized Yzerman for not doing more at the 2024 deadline, and the team struggled down the stretch without reinforcements. Acquiring Justin Faulk and David Perron this past season also was not enough to get the Red Wings into the top eight in the Eastern Conference.

Larkin asking to be traded – with Minnesota, Florida and Vegas initially the only teams on his list – threatened the direction of the team at a time when it looked like Yzerman's position was safe. Yzerman last month said he could not guarantee granting Larkin's wish because the player is signed for five more seasons at an average annual salary of $8.7 million.

Figuring out that situation will now be someone else's call, as will improving a roster that has perennially underacheived expectations.

"I'm looking forward to bringing in new leadership to build the championship-caliber organization (Detroit) deserves," Ilitch said.

REGENTS

From page B1

Manuel told The Detroit News on Monday that he is staying at Michigan amid reports about his future being in trouble. When asked by text Monday morning whether he is staying, Manuel told The News, "Yes, I am." Manuel declined to talk when approached Thursday by a Detroit News reporter.

Manuel told Yahoo Sports reporter Ross Dellenger via text on Monday, "The president and I have had several great conversations over the past couple of days. There are no plans for me not to continue to be the athletic director for the near future." Manuel was referring to UM president Domenico Grasso.

The 58-year-old athletic director's comments came after national outlets, including ESPN and Yahoo Sports, reported that a decision on his future could be discussed as part of the review of a broader investigation into the Michigan Athletic Department's culture. One Michigan blogger reported that a buyout offer is on the table.

Manuel appeared on Michigan insider Sam Webb's radio show on WTKA 1050-AM on Tuesday morning and didn't deny that a buyout was a possibility.

In December, the Board of Regents widened an investigation into former Michigan football coach Sherrone Moore to include the culture of the Athletic department when Moore was arrested after barging into his former assistant's residence.

This incident, along with the way Moore's firing was handled, sparked the university to retain attorneys with the Chicago-based law firm Jenner & Block, who were originally hired to investigate Moore's relationship with Shiver. The university authorized the attorneys to expand their investigation to look at the "culture" of the athletic department.

Manuel, who has led the department since 2016, has overseen four national championships and a litany of scandals and questionable behavior by coaches and athletic department staff during his tenure.

Verlander pumps up his team in final All-Star Game

By DAN GELSTON
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Justin Verlander used his fingers in this trip to Philadelphia simply to tip his cap toward applauding All-Star Game fans.

He once playfully flipped off Phillies fans when his Houston Astros were in Philadelphia for the 2022 World Series.

There was only mutual respect in this game.

The 43-year-old Verlander was one of the few All-Stars on Tuesday night to receive a warm ovation in Philadelphia from a crowd that reveled in jeering just about any player who was not in a Phillies uniform.

Verlander is set to retire at the end of the season to cap a career that includes three Cy Young Awards.

Up first, one more Midsummer Classic.

"In his 10th and final All-Star Game, please welcome to Philadelphia, Justin Verlander," the public address announcer noted.

Verlander didn't totally sit out the American League's 4-0 win over the National League on Tuesday night.

Toronto manager John Schneider asked Verlander to address the team and share thoughts on the importance of the All-Star honor out of respect for the pitcher's career.

"You never know when you're going to be in this position," Schneider said as he relayed Verlander's message. "You have to appreciate the people along the way. He's made lifelong friends from being in this game for so long."

Verlander had more gas left in the pregame speech tank. He talked AL starter Dylan Cease out of throwing a changeup as the first pitch of the game and go with a heater against Phillies slugger Kyle Schwarber.

Cease threw a 96.9-mph four-seam strike to Schwarber and struck out the side in the first inning,

"He could be a politician," Cease said of Verlander.

Kevin McGonigle, Verlander's' 21-year-old Tigers teammate and suburban Philadelphia native, soaked in the moment when Verlander took the floor.

"He kept telling the guys that you don't take anything for granted and if you keep working hard, you will find yourself back in this room multiple time," McGonigle said. "Be a good teammate and building relationships and getting to learn as much as you can from other guys."

Verlander, who did not discuss the speech, enjoyed the chance to participate in some final festivities and walked the All-Star red carpet in the afternoon with his wife, model Kate Upton, and their two young children.

The lone bummer for Verlander is that the Detroit Tigers All-Star was unable to pitch in the game as he recovers from a hamstring injury. Verlander, the oldest player in Major League Baseball, signed a $13 million, one-year contract to rejoin the Tigers in February.

He has made only one start in an injury-ravaged season and was named to the All-Star team as a Legend Pick by Commissioner Rob Manfred. Phillies slugger Bryce Harper earned the honor in the National League.

"I'm happy with the body of work," Verlander said ahead of the game. "I hope I can add to it somehow, someway in the second half. When I look back, I know I gave it everything."

Verlander went 183-115 from 2005 to 2017 with the Tigers. He won the American League Rookie of the Year award in 2006 and both the AL MVP and Cy Young Award in 2011. He helped Detroit reach the World Series in 2006 and 2012, along with four straight division titles from 2011 to 2014.

Verlander was the 2017 ALCS MVP in Houston and helped the Astros win the World Series that year, and was a key player for them when they won another title in 2022. He won his second and third Cy Young Awards in 2019 and 2022.

Verlander, who also had brief stints with the New York Mets and San Francisco, played coy when asked about which team cap he would choose for his sure-thing induction into the Hall of Fame.

"At least, I was able to narrow it down to two," Verlander said with a laugh. "I'm not there yet."

Verlander relaxed against a clubhouse wall next to his locker as he reflected over a career that stamped him as perhaps the best of his era.

Verlander has a career record of 266-159 with a 3.33 ERA in 556 starts across 21 major league seasons with the Tigers, Astros, Mets and San Francisco Giants. He has 3,554 strikeouts while tossing 26 complete games, including nine shutouts.

Not bad for a kid from Virginia who was sent to a baseball academy by his family to help him gain arm strength. His parents knew so little about how to guide a kid that flashed big league potential that his father, Richard, bought a most unique kind of instructional guide.

"My dad bought a 'How to Pitch for Dummies' book," Verlander said to laughter. "I'm not joking. He's like, OK, step one, you step back with your left foot. Step two, you turn this way. We were doing that in my front yard because he learned I could throw a rock pretty far."

Turned out, with a little help along the way, Verlander learned to throw a baseball pretty hard.

Verlander just hopes in his last season, he hasn't thrown his last one.

A tale of two Chicago baseball teams as Cubs, White Sox aim their sights on October

Paul Sullivan

Will Venable and Craig Counsell were in good position heading into the All-Star break with teams that had been through various struggles and came out ahead.

Progress is not always accomplished in a conventional manner, as both managers can attest.

The Chicago White Sox were tied for first in the American League Central, despite starting 1-5 and being outscored 52-21 in those six games, looking like a repeat of 2025, or perhaps even '24. They lost slugger Munetaka Murakami for six weeks in a stretch where they faced the Atlanta Braves, Los Angeles Dodgers and New York Yankees in consecutive series, a season-wrecking road to destruction.

But the Sox went 5-3 over the stretch with a rainout, and have gone 11-11 since, staying above water with Murakami now back.

The Sox enter the second half with a 50-45 record, and Venable is on track for the AL Manager of the Year award.

"We just settled in, and these guys are really all major leaguers, but if you're going to survive in this league you have to deal with adversity," Venable said Sunday. "I thought we did a good job and stayed the course in the early going when it was really tough. We just didn't feel stable, so to find our way means a lot."

There have been many surprises in the half, including rookies Sam Antonacci and Tristan Peters, Miguel Vargas' improvement, and relievers Sean Newcomb and Bryan Hudson. But Murakami is the one who changed the way fans feel about the Sox, and maybe the way the Sox feel about themselves.

It all started when the Sox agreed to his request to install bidets in the locker room.

"We got him the bidet, and that just speaks to trying to get him as comfortable as possible," general manager Chris Getz told me in spring training.

As the old saying goes, the team that bidets together, stays together.

"It's a game-changer," one Sox outfielder told a Japanese reporter.

Game changed.

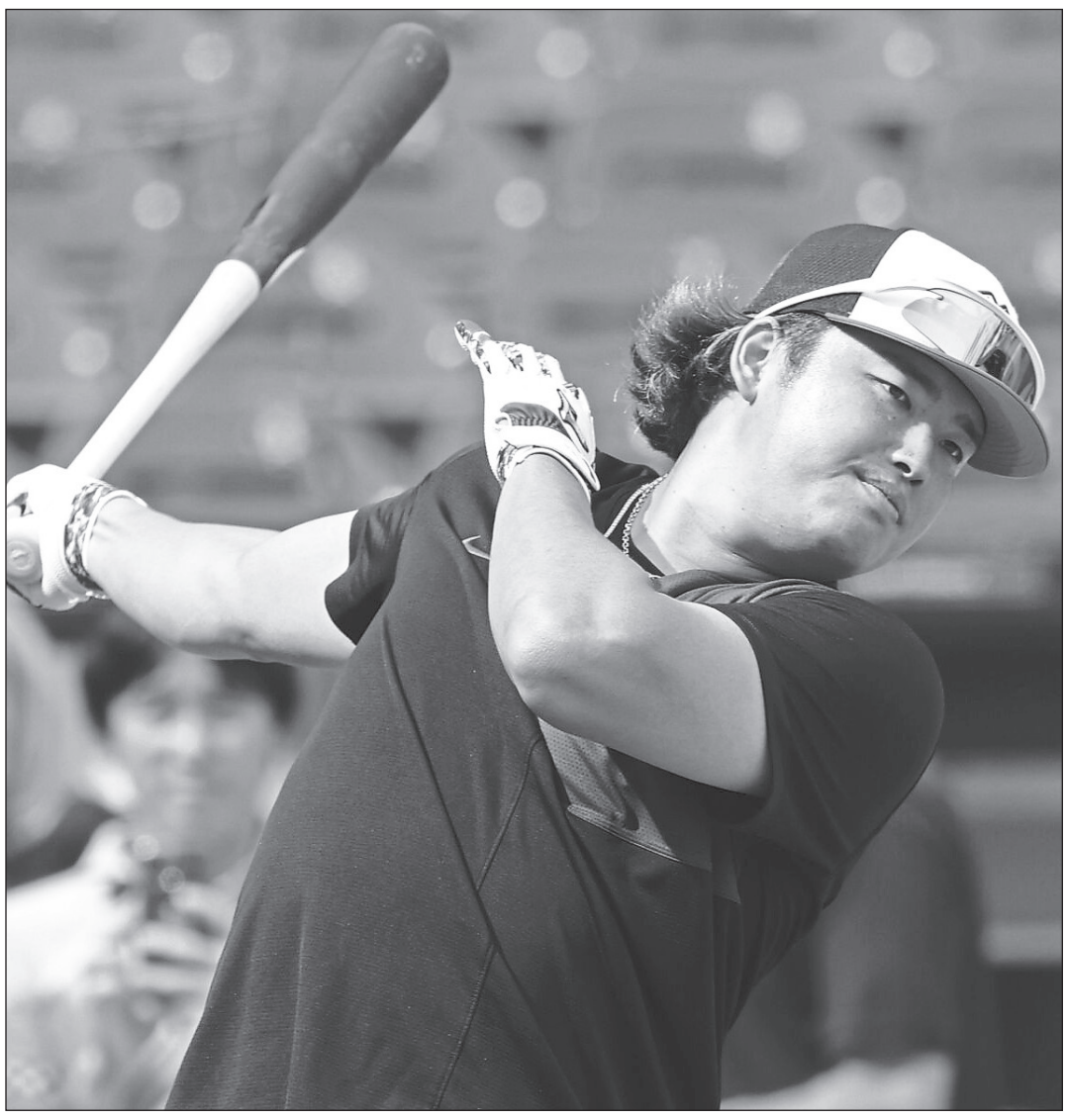
I asked Murakami in spring training if he was ready to become the face of the franchise.

"I haven't really gotten to a point where I've had any results in the major league yet," Murakami replied through his interpreter. "So I don't think of myself as the face of the franchise yet. I'll try to build on that this season."

It didn't take long before he proved himself worthy of the designation. Even the six-week absence with a hamstring injury couldn't stop the Mune Train from rolling along, and this week he made the All-Star team and participated in the Home Run Derby.

In Murakami, the Sox found a slugger who could help lift a team with his bat and help lift a fan base with his mere presence. The Sox have not had a free agent make a first impression like Mune for a long time.

He's not the only one to generate interest in a Sox team that stunned the experts in the first half after being pegged for another season of 100 or more losses, but the ovations he received in his return to the South Side last weekend indicate this is the start of a beautiful friendship.



John J. Kim / Chicago Tribune / TNS

Chicago White Sox first baseman Munetaka Murakami warms up during batting practice before a game against the Athletics at Rate Field on July 10 in Chicago.

Murakami is only signed through 2027, and if he's looking to maximize his earnings, he'll likely be gone when his contract ends and he becomes a free agent. The Sox haven't signed a player to a nine-figure contract, as every Sox fan knows, and unless Chairman Jerry Reinsdorf takes the kind of risk most other owners consider standard operating procedure for superstars, he'll be too expensive to keep.

The key is to win now, enjoy him while you can, and cross your fingers that Murakami might love Chicago enough to take a hometown discount.

The Cubs signed their own face of the franchise to a six-year, $115 million deal at the start of the season, rewarding Pete Crow-Armstrong for doing PCA things, which may or may not include Gold Glove defense, taking extra bases, home run hitting and bat slamming. (Though probably not the bat slamming.)

The sound of his initials alone drew an instant reaction, with "PCA" chants from road-tripping Cubs fans annoying the locals in venues from Dodger Stadium to Great American Ball Park to Rate Field.

Sometimes being a villain pays off.

The Cubs held the top National League wild-card spot at the break and sliced the Milwaukee Brewers' division lead to five games with a 20-8 stretch since June 11, roughly coinciding with Crow-Armstrong's move up to the leadoff spot.

It's been a zig-zag route from 15 games over .500 to .500 and back to 12 games over .500.

"Our record is our record," Counsell said Sunday. "I don't have any grand stories. You guys write the stories about the first half. We're trying to grind out as many wins as we can. That's the job, that's the goal. Keep trying to stack up wins."

A 54-42 record is more than satisfactory considering the pitching injuries and early struggles of Alex Bregman and Dansby Swanson, who leads the team with 58 RBI, including 26 in a 10-game span.

Zig, meet zag.

The story of the '26 Cubs can't be told without mentioning three things: Crow-Armstrong, the injuries and a bunch of guys few fans had heard of back in February who became important pieces to the playoff puzzle.

Everyone who claimed in spring training that Trent Thornton and Ryan Rolison would be high-leverage relievers for the Cubs down the stretch, raise your hand.

No, not you, Jed.

Bregman signed a five-year, $175 million deal and started slowly before surging in the final week before the break. Thornton and Rolison combined make under $2 million and have performed with next to no attention in the first half, joining Jacob Webb as late-inning options for Counsell.

Hoyer signed the 32-year-old Thornton to a one-year, $1 million deal on Jan. 23 after he posted a 4.89 ERA with the Seattle Mariners last year. An injury to Daniel Palencia forced Counsell to audible, and now Thornton has three saves and a 1.00 ERA over his last 10 appearances, after saving only one game in his previous 250 major-league appearances.

"I'm not sure if you saw this, Sully, but we don't have a closer," Counsell said Saturday when asked about Thornton's usage at the end of a win in Cincinnati.

"No, I mean that's what I'm so proud of the guys for, actually," Counsell said. "I kind of joke with them that when the phone rings they don't actually know who it's going to be. But they all do their jobs really well, and I couldn't be happier with what they're doing."

Always with the joking, that's Craig Counsell.

Thornton acted like he'd been closing for years, pumping his fist and screaming guttural sounds. He seemed to be enjoying the opportunity to close after a lifetime of almost no opportunities to close.

"I'm not going to complain at all," he said.

That's always a good idea when you've received a promotion.

The 32-year-old Rolison was sold by the Colorado Rockies to the Atlanta Braves last November after posting a 7.02 ERA in 31 appearances in his rookie year. He was then designated for assignment and claimed by the White Sox in December, then DFA'd again and selected off waivers by the Cubs in January.

The left-hander, who earns $780,000, is 5-1 with a 2.80 ERA in 32 appearances, limiting left-handed hitters to a .208 average.

Who knew?

"I didn't know where I'd end up, being on the waiver wire and getting claimed and DFA'd, it was kind of frustrating," Rolison said Sunday. "I knew my offseason was going really well, and I came into spring training with an open mind. The Cubs sat me down and said, 'This is why we think you can be successful,' and that sparked my positivity on the outlook of '26."

The positivity paid off, and a mix of relievers who didn't know they'd still be Cubs in mid-July are all part of the narrative.

"There's been a lot of bumps and bruises along the way, but everyone is answering the call," Thornton said.

Paul Sullivan is a columnist for the Chicago Tribune.

NCAA women's tournament to seed the top 16 by true ranking next year

By DOUG FEINBERG
AP Basketball Writer

Beginning with next year's NCAA women's basketball tournament, the top 16 teams will be placed in the bracket in their true ranking regardless of conference affiliation.

In the past, the top four teams in a conference would be placed in different regions to protect them from playing each other until the Final Four. For example, the tournament this past season had four SEC teams in the top eight overall seeds. Texas was third, South Carolina fourth, LSU fifth and Vanderbilt seventh. LSU was dropped down to seventh and Vanderbilt eighth in the bracketing to avoid having them be in the same regions.

Now if that happened going forward, the teams would remain where their seeds should have them.

"We put a lot of time into establishing those top 16 teams in the order they go in," NCAA women's basketball committee chair Amanda Braun said in a phone interview. "You're splitting hairs to decide who has the edge and some of that is undone by those principles. To all of us, the work we did and the work those teams did justifies keeping them where they are in that group of 16."

The men's selection committee will still separate out the top four seeds in each conference and put them in different regions.

The change would potentially only really affect the SEC, ACC, Big Ten and Big 12 as those were the only conferences that had four or more teams in the NCAA field.

The women's tournament has started giving financial incentives – units – to teams for each round they advance in the tournament the past two seasons. Braun said that it wasn't brought up at all during the entire week of meetings that the committee had.

Ross D. Franklin / AP

South Carolina head coach Dawn Staley motions towards the court against UCLA during the women's National Championship on April 5, in Phoenix.

The change comes on the heels of the NCAA expanding its tournament field to 76 teams starting in 2027.

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0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
COUNTY OF CASS

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO. and JUDGE
2026-148-DE
Judge Carol M. Bealor

In the matter of:
Joanna Regina Thompson, Deceased

TO ALL CREDITORS: **

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, Joanna Regina Thompson, Deceased, died December 21, 2025. are notified that all claims against the state will be forever barred unless presented to John Thompson, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 60296 M-62, Cassopolis MI 49031 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Dated June 29, 2026

SCHUITMAKER MORAITIS LAW OFFICE, PC
CHRISTOPHER MORAITIS P87052
Attorney name Bar no.
181 W. Michigan Ave., Ste. 1, P.O. Box 520
Address
Paw Paw, MI 49079
(269) 657-3177
City, state, zip Telephone no.

John Thompson
Petitioner name
823 Arlington Ave North
Address
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727)741-1667
City, state, zip Telephone no

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
COUNTY OF Cass

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO. and JUDGE
2026-161-DE
Hon. Carol M. Bealor

Estate of: Chester John Bonine
Date of birth: 09/07/1935

TO ALL CREDITORS: *

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, Chester John Bonine died 06/18/2026. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Connie Wittorp, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date: 07/08/2026

Heidi Duncan P76168
Attorney name Bar no.
107 Pennsylvania Ave
Address
Dowagiac, MI 49047
City, State, Zip
269-782-9895
Telephone no.

Connie Wittorp
Personal representative
530 Putnam Street
Address
Eau Claire, WI 54703
City, state, zip

PUBLIC NOTICE
CITY OF DOWAGIAC

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Public Accuracy Test for the August 4, 2026, Primary Election has been scheduled for ***2:00 p.m., July 23, 2026*** in the Dowagiac City Hall located at 241 S. Front Street, Dowagiac, Michigan, 49047. The Public Accuracy Test is conducted to demonstrate that the program and computer that will be used to tabulate the results of the election, counts the votes in the manner prescribed by law.

Patty Patano, City Clerk
City of Dowagiac

0900 LEGALS

Economy Storage, 2206 Yankee Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday July 25. 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

Unit # Name
4 Ronald Phillips
27 Nicolas Sansom
28 Emalee Anderson
37 Kayla Johnson
59 Eian Nace
62 Andrew Dunifin
67 Jerome Jankowiak
82 Ericka Pitone
85 Shelden Walden
111 Izayah Roeder
125/179 Steve Kelley
127/633 Chris Norris
145/467/468 Michael Merritt
148 Gloster Johnson
164 Bradley Hattenback
183 Cindy Fisher
184/66 Mary Anderson
185 Candy Whitmire
190/306 Linda Nilson
191 Alan Smith
192 Patricia Yoder
240 Teyshawn Wallace
258 Brianna Coon
259 Rose Mitchell
268 Dan Hoft
270 Vincent Bosch
272 Kurt Shepard
273 Tony Pompey
278 Chelsie Carlyle
284 Kathleen Peterson
331 Valerie Outlaw
334 Sheila Kollars
342 Terrence Moss
346 DaMonica Williams
356 Chase Molica
379 Bobbie Helms
383 Karen Turner
409 Brenda Lary
410/534 Rebecca Coleman
427 McCade Reese
442 Dawn Hojara
451 Jean Fitch
452 Tyler Mahar
490 Jackie Pugh
526 Keith Hill
541 Nicole Hurt
545 Candy Whitmire
608 Robert Conner
619 Timothy Wiese
638 Britney Stanczyk
639 Barry Brann

Niles U-Stor-It, 1314 E. Main Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday July 25, 2026, at 10:30 a.m.

1 Anne Billingsley
25 John Harrington
28 Lawson Fink
52 Alana Abrams

J & J Storage, 2220 S. 13th Street and 2627 S. 11th Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday July 25, 2026, at 11:00 a.m.

31/28 Christine Runner
57 James Colburn
64 Wendy Jones
127A Tim Chavis
167A Kiyan Kinsey
107 Bobby Marrow
125 Kristina Hemminger
165 Sharon Helms
175 Sheri Rutledge-Blocher
227 Jennifer Nichols
263 Tamara Holmes
264 Rogert Hobson
292 The Woodshed Crafts
319 Jeannie Barsodi
373 Rhonda Sue Outlaw
399 Lisa Hayslip
452 Aaron Smith
481 Natosha Libertowski

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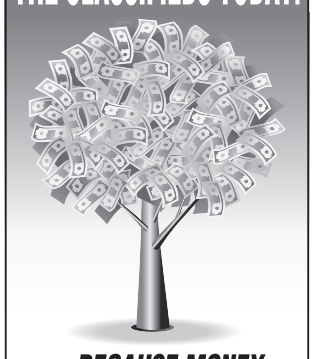

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STATE OF MICHIGAN
BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
NOTICE OF HEARING FOR THE ELECTRIC CUSTOMERS OF INDIANA MICHIGAN POWER COMPANY
CASE NO. U-22028

· Indiana Michigan Power Company requests Michigan Public Service Commission's approval to commence a renewable energy cost reconciliation proceeding for the 12-month period ended December 31, 2025.

· The information below describes how a person may participate in this case.

· You may call or write Indiana Michigan Power Company, 2425 Meadowbrook Rd., Benton Harbor, MI 49022, 517-367-1242, for a free copy of its application. Any person may review the documents at the offices of Indiana Michigan Power Company or on the Commission's website at: https://mi-psc.my.site.com/s/.

· A pre-hearing will be held:

DATE/TIME: Tuesday, August 11, 2026, at 10:00 AM

BEFORE: Administrative Law Judge Christopher S. Saunders

LOCATION: Video/Teleconference

PARTICIPATION: Any interested person may participate. Persons needing any assistance to participate or who are seeking access to the video/teleconference should contact the Administrative Law Judge's secretary at (517) 284-8130 or by email at LARA-MOAHR-PSC@michigan.gov in advance of the hearing.

The Michigan Public Service Commission (Commission) will hold a pre-hearing to consider Indiana Michigan Power Company's (I&M) June 26, 2026 application requesting the Commission to: 1) approve I&M to commence a Renewable Energy Cost Reconciliation proceeding for the 12-month period ended December 31, 2025; 2) approve zero (0) Renewable Energy Credits as I&M's 2024 Renewable Energy Credit compliance obligation set forth in 2008 PA 295, as amended; 3) determine that I&M is in compliance with the renewable energy standard requirements set forth in 2008 PA 295, as amended, for the 2025 compliance period; 4) approve as reasonable and prudent I&M's reconciliation of the Renewable Energy Plan regulatory liability balance and total actual cost of compliance through December 31, 2025, resulting in a regulatory liability, including carrying charges, of $21,617,135; and 5) grant I&M such other and additional relief as the Commission may deem reasonable and appropriate.

All documents filed in this case shall be submitted electronically through the Commission's E-Dockets website at: https://mi-psc.my.site.com/s/. Requirements and instructions for filing can be found in the User Manual on the E-Dockets help page. Documents may also be submitted, in PDF format, as an attachment to an email sent to: LARA-MPSC-edockets@michigan.gov. If you require assistance prior to e-filing, contact Commission staff at (517) 284-8090 or by email at: LARA-MPSC-edockets@michigan.gov.

Any person wishing to intervene and become a party to the case shall electronically file a petition to intervene with this Commission by August 4, 2026. (Interested persons may elect to file using the traditional paper format.) The proof of service shall indicate service upon Indiana Michigan Power Company's attorney, Jason T. Hanselman, 201 Townsend St., Ste. 900, Lansing, MI 48933.

The prehearing is scheduled to be held remotely by video conference or teleconference. Persons filing a petition to intervene will be advised of the process for participating in the hearing.

Any person wishing to appear at the hearing to make a statement of position without becoming a party to the case may participate by filing an appearance. To file an appearance, the individual must attend the hearing and advise the presiding administrative law judge of their wish to make a statement of position. Mich Admin Code, R 792.10413 (Rule 413).

Any person wishing to file a public comment may do so by filing a written statement in this docket. The written statement may be mailed or emailed and should reference Case No. U-22028. Statements may be emailed to: LARA-MPSC-edockets@michigan.gov. Statements may be mailed to: Executive Secretary, Michigan Public Service Commission, 7109 West Saginaw Hwy., Lansing, MI 48917.

All information submitted to the Commission in this matter becomes public information, thus available on the Michigan Public Service Commission's website, and subject to disclosure. Please do not include information you wish to remain private. For more information on how to participate in a case, you may contact the Executive Secretary at the above address or by telephone at (517) 284-8090.

Requests for adjournment must be made pursuant to Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules R 792.10422 and R 792.10432. Requests for further information on adjournment should be directed to (517) 284-8130.

Jurisdiction is pursuant to 1909 PA 106, as amended, MCL 460.551 et seq.; 1919 PA 419, as amended, MCL 460.54 et seq.; 1939 PA 3, as amended, MCL 460.1 et seq.; 1969 PA 306, as amended, MCL 24.201 et seq.; 1982 PA 304, as amended, MCL 460.6j et seq.; 2008 PA 295, MCL 460.1001 et seq.; and Parts 1 & 4 of the Administrative Hearing Rules of the Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules, Mich. Admin Code, R 792.10106(2), (3), (4), (5), (6), and (7); R 792.10121; and R 792.10401 through R 792.10448.

U-22028

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on August 12, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Robert E. Hunt and Marilyn J. Hunt, husband and wife
Original Mortgagee: Credit Union Mortgage Company
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): Member First Mortgage, LLC
Date of Mortgage: October 22, 2004
Date of Mortgage Recording: October 26, 2004
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $33,715.25
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Village of Cassopolis, Cass County, Michigan, and described as: Lot number 1, Block 3 South, Range 4 East of the Altered Plat of the Village of Cassopolis, as recorded in Liber 41 of Deeds Page 622.
Common street address (if any): 303 S Fulton St, Cassopolis, MI 49031-1208
The redemption period shall be 1 year from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a.
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: July 11, 2026
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515 1598027(07-11)(08-01)

SHORT FORECLOSURE NOTICE - CASS COUNTY Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on August 12, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. MORTGAGE: Mortgagor(s): Steven J. Gaborik and Ebony R. Gaborik, husband and wife, and John W. Gaborik, a married man, as joint tenants with rights if survivorship Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. ("MERS"), solely as nominee for lender and lender`s successors and assigns Date of mortgage: October 7, 2022 Recorded on October 12, 2022, Liber 1224, on Page 1127, Foreclosing Assignee (if any): Lakeview Loan Servicing, LLC Amount claimed to be due at the date hereof: One Hundred Eighty-Seven Thousand Five Hundred Eighty-Eight and 65/100 Dollars ($187,588.65) Mortgaged premises: Situated in Cass County, and described as: Commencing 440 feet East of the Northwest corner of the Northwest 1/4 of Section 21, T5S, R13W, Marcellus Township, Cass County, Michigan; thence East 160 feet; thence South 248 feet; thence West 160 feet; thence North 248 feet to the point of beginning. Commonly known as 13845 Marcellus Highway, Marcellus, MI 49067 The redemption period will be 6 month from the date of such sale, unless abandoned under MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period will be 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days from the MCL 600.3241a(b) notice, whichever is later; or unless extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. If the above referenced property is sold at a foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of Act 236 of 1961, under MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Lakeview Loan Servicing, LLC Mortgagee/Assignee Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. 23938 Research Dr, Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 248.539.7400
1598271 (07-11)(08-01)

PUBLIC NOTICE
TO
TAKE LAND "IN TRUST"

ACTION: Notice of final agency determination of mandatory acquisition to take land in trust under 25 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 151.

SUMMARY: The Acting Superintendent, Michigan Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior on the below date, has made a determination(s) of mandatory acquisition to acquire real property in trust for the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, Michigan and Indiana. This Acquisition is Mandatory pursuant to Pursuant to Public Law 103-323, l08 Stat. 2152 (September 21, 1994) (referred to as the "Pokagon Restoration Act"), at Section 6 of the Pokagon Restoration Act.

DATE: This determination(s) was made on June 29, 2026 and July 9, 2026.

The land referred to herein is identified as the Kelly, Knapp, Schrader, Ditz, Jerz, Jewel, Norris, Schricker, Singh, Skibbe, Stewart, and Urbanski properties (Totaling 629.25 acres, m/l), located in Townships of Pokagon and Wayne, Cass County, Michigan, and are identified as:

Located in Section 15, 16, 17, 19, and 20 of Township 6 South, Range 16 West and Township 5 South, Range 15 West:

Parcel Number	Parcel Name	Acres	Township
14-110-019-309-11 14-110-019-309-20 14-110-019-309-30 14-110-019-309-40	Norris	10.13	Pokagon
14-110-019-309-00 14-110-019-311-00	Kelley	110.16	Pokagon
14-110-016-274-01	Urbanski	216.22	Pokagon
14-110-016-273-10	Skibbe	97.84	Pokagon
14-110-015-264-30	Jewel	22.85	Pokagon
14-110-017-296-50	Ditz	10.8	Pokagon
14-110-017-296-10 14-110-017-296-40	Schricker	10.22	Pokagon
14-110-015-265-00	Singh	15.74	Pokagon
14-110-015-265-20	Knapp	2.18	Pokagon
14-110-017-290-00 14-110-017-293-00	Schrader	101.6	Pokagon
14-150-020-007-01	Jerz	29.71	Wayne
14-150-020-005-10	Stewart	1.8	Wayne

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas Wilkins, Realty Specialist, Midwest Regional Office, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 5600 West American Blvd., Suite 500, Bloomington, Minnesota 55437, telephone (612) 725-4500.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This notice is published to comply with the requirement of 25 CFR, Part 151.13(d)(2)(III) that notice be given to the public of the decision by the authorized representative of the Secretary of the Interior to acquire land in trust at least 30 days prior to signatory acceptance of land in trust.

A copy of the determination is from the office identified in the "FOR FURTHER INFORMATION" section of this notice. Any party who wishes to seek judicial review of the Acting Superintendent's decision must first exhaust administrative remedies. The Acting Superintendent's decision may be appealed to the Regional Director, Midwest Region, in accordance with the regulations in 25 CFR part 2 and 43 CFR 4.310-4.340.

If you choose to appeal this decision, your notice of appeal to the Regional Director must be signed by you or your attorney and **must be either postmarked and mailed (if you use mail) or delivered (if you use another means of physical delivery, such as FedEx or UPS) to the Regional Director within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice.** The regulations do not authorize filings by facsimile/fax or by electronic means. Your notice of appeal should clearly identify the decision being appealed. You must send copies of your notice of appeal to (1) Midwest Regional Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Midwest Regional Office, Norman Pointe II, 5600 West American Boulevard, Suite 500, Bloomington, MN 55437; (2) each interested party known to you; and (3) the Acting Superintendent, Michigan Agency, 2845 Ashmun Street, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan 49783-3732. Your notice of appeal sent to the Regional Director must include a statement verifying that you have sent copies to these officials and interested parties and should identify them by names or titles and addresses.

If you file a notice of appeal, the Regional Office, BIA, will notify you of further procedures. If no appeal is timely filed, this decision will become final for the Department of Interior at the expiration of the appeal period. No extension of time may be granted for filing a notice of appeal.

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OUTDOORS

Submitting hunting or fishing photos

Have a behemoth buck, a tremendous turkey or super-sized salmon? Please submit photos to sports@TheHP.com.

Your photo must be in focus, all persons in the photo must be identified, and the general location of the hunt must be provided (for example, 10-point buck shot in Benton Township, black bear shot near Munising, Mich., etc.)

Photo provided / Josh Duis

Hudsonian godwit, lower right, seven marbled godwits and a ring-billed gull, June 30, New Buffalo Beach.

Hudsonian godwit makes rare summer visit to New Buffalo

July is the month that interesting shorebirds start to show up on Southwest Michigan beaches! Some shorebirds, such as the willet and marbled godwit, are already done nesting, and are now migrating at a leisurely pace towards their wintering grounds on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts.

Jonathan Wuepper
Southwest Michigan Wildlife

Both the willet and marbled godwits are large shorebirds that nest in the "prairie pothole" regions of the Great Plains. They are considered uncommon "fall" migrants in Southwest Michigan, but are being reported in record numbers this year. On July 1, Don Estep of LaPorte photographed a flock of more than 350 willets in New Buffalo, a new high count of the species in Michigan!

The most impressive shorebird to appear on our beaches this year is that of a single Hudsonian godwit on June 30 in New Buffalo. The bird was present within a flock of marbled godwits, and was seen and photographed by multiple observers.

The Hudsonian godwit is seen every few years in our region, but usually later, between August and November. There are just three records of the Hudsonian godwit during the ornithological summer months of June and July in Berrien County over the last 65 years. The individual seen June 30 in New Buffalo possibly represents an unmated individual.

The Hudsonian godwit performs an epic migration twice per year. It breeds in Alaska, Yukon, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories in the west. In eastern North America it nests on the south shore of the Hudson Bay. It is thought that the individuals that appear in our region are of the Hudson Bay population.

The Hudsonian godwit winters thousands of miles to the south, along the shores of Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and southern Brazil. Most Hudsonian godwits that nest on the south shore of Hudson Bay are thought to migrate nonstop, offshore of the Atlantic coast of Canada and the U.S. to South America. A relative few migrate through the Great Lakes region.

All of the above shorebirds primarily eat worms, insects and other marine invertebrates. The Hudsonian godwit builds a nest close to water, constructing it using sedges, moss and lichen. An average of four eggs are laid, and both parents take turns with egg incubation.

Caroline Duncan of Benton Township found a showy emerald moth on July 1. This pretty moth is uncommon in Michigan, but more common in Indiana and Ohio. This species feeds exclusively on staghorn sumac and poison ivy!

Jonathan Wuepper is an area naturalist. Report your sightings to him at wuepperj@gmail.com

Photo provided / Josh Duis

Rare shorebirds in flight, June 30, New Buffalo. Willet, left, Hudsonian godwit, top, showing distinctive black tail with white band, and six marbled godwits.

Photo provided / Don Estep

A portion of a flock of more than 350 willets on July 1 in New Buffalo. This is a record high count of the species in the state of Michigan!

Photo provided / Caroline Duncan

Showy emerald moth, Benton Township, July 1.

Help track Michigan's next generation of its wild turkeys

PROVIDED BY MICHIGAN DNR

If you spot a hen turkey leading a line of poults (baby turkeys) this summer, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources wants to hear from you.

It's time for Michigan's wild turkey brood survey: a community science effort that helps wildlife biologists understand how well turkeys are reproducing across the state and provides valuable information about the health of Michigan's turkey population. The DNR is asking residents to report sightings of wild turkeys and turkey broods – family units consisting of at least one adult hen and her young – July 1 through Aug. 31.

"Summer is one of the best times of year to see wild turkey families," said Adam Bump, the DNR's upland game bird specialist. "Every brood observation helps us better understand how many young turkeys are surviving and where reproduction is occurring across Michigan."

Wild turkeys are one of Michigan's greatest wildlife conservation success stories. Once extirpated (locally extinct) from the state, turkeys have rebounded and now are found in every Michigan county.

Building on three years of observations

Maintaining healthy turkey populations requires continued monitoring, and that's where residents can make a difference.

Now entering its fourth year, the turkey brood survey is part of a larger multistate effort supported by the National Wild Turkey Federation to monitor turkey populations using a standardized survey protocol.

Since the survey launched in 2023, Michigan residents have submitted more than 17,000 observations, documenting over 36,200 hens, 95,300 poults and 15,500 male turkeys.

Those observations will allow biologists to track annual changes in turkey reproduction and compare Michigan's turkey population trends with those in other states.

"Turkey populations are influenced by many factors, including weather, habitat conditions and poult survival," Bump said. "By collecting observations year after year, we're building a long-term dataset that helps us understand trends before they become problems."

What biologists learn from turkey broods

The survey focuses on turkey broods because they provide insight into reproductive success. When participants report the number of hens and poults they observe, biologists can estimate average brood size and other indicators that help measure how successfully young turkeys are surviving through the summer months.

"Broods tell us a lot about what happened during nesting season and the weeks immediately after hatching," said Caitlin Ott-Conn, a laboratory scientist with the DNR Wildlife Division who oversees survey data collection and analysis. "When thousands of people share observations from across the state, we gain a much clearer picture of turkey reproduction than we could through traditional surveys alone."

How to participate

Anyone can contribute to the turkey brood survey. Between July 1 and Aug. 31, simply report any wild turkey sightings using the online survey form available on the turkey brood survey webpage.

Participants will be asked a few short questions about:

The date of the observation.

The location.

The number of hens observed.

The number of poults observed.

The number of gobblers (adult males) or jakes (juvenile males, about a year old) observed.

Most reports take only a minute or two to complete. The survey uses an email login so observations can be associated with individual participants, helping biologists better analyze the data. Report turkey sightings.

Every observation matters

Whether you see a single hen with two poults or a large flock of turkeys feeding in a field, your observation can help improve understanding of Michigan's wild turkey population.

"Everyone can play a role in wildlife science," Bump said. "If you see turkeys this summer, take a minute to report them. Together, we're creating one of the most comprehensive pictures of turkey reproduction in Michigan and helping ensure wild turkeys remain part of our state for generations to come."

Learn more and submit an observation at Michigan.gov/Turkey.

Photo by David Kenyon

Take just a few minutes to report any turkeys you see, July 1 through Aug. 31, and contribute valuable data to track the health of the state's turkey population.

Trump administration rolls back a key protection for imperiled wildlife

By WUFEI YU and MATTHEW BROWN
Associated Press

PHOENIX — The Trump administration finalized a rule Friday that changes how agencies enforce the Endangered Species Act and eliminates a key protection for imperiled wildlife against logging, oil drilling and other activities.

The administration narrowed the definition of "harm" under the landmark law – a change with broad implications.

For decades, the government defined harm broadly to include encroachments on places with threatened and endangered animals. The change announced Friday would allow oil and gas drilling, mining, logging and and other development on critical wildlife habitats so long as the animals themselves aren't killed or injured.

Environmentalists warned the move could cause some species to go extinct by opening the door to habitat destruction. Industry representatives and their Republican allies have long argued the landmark 1973 environmental law is wielded too broadly, to the detriment of economic growth.

Administration officials said they were returning the law to its original intent, following a 2024 Supreme Court decision that limited the authority of federal agencies to interpret environmental statutes passed by Congress. They described the government's prior definition of harm as an intrusion on private property rights.

It's among a suite of changes to wildlife protections that officials have pursued under President Donald Trump.

"For years, federal agencies abused the ESA to obstruct lawful land use and burden American families and businesses," Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said in a statement.

The change was first proposed in April 2025 and environmentalists fought unsuccessfully to block it. Habitat destruction is the biggest cause of extinction, according to wildlife advocates.

"This is one of the most horrific attempts to harm wildlife in American history and a gift to the oil barons and foreign mining companies," said Aaron Weiss, the executive director of the Center for Western Priorities.

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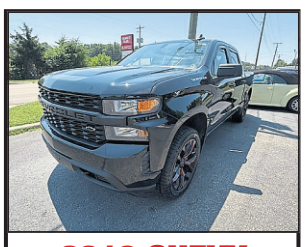

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